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C O N T R I B U T O R S

DR. WILLIAM D. McCAIN, former director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, is now president of Mississippi-Southern College, Hattiesburg.

DR. GORDON T. CHAPPELL, former president of the Alabama Historical Association, is a professor of history at Huntingdon College, Montgomery.

DR. JAMES F. DOSTER is an associate professor of history at the University of Alabama.

EDGAR A. STEWART is a member of the law firm of Reeves & Stewart, Selma, Alabama.

The Adventures of an Archivist

By WILLIAM D. MCCAIN

SINCE I AM an archivist merely masquerading as a college president and since you have a great interest in the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, which was established by an act of February 27, 1901, and which was the first of its kind in the nation, I have decided to discuss with you some aspects of the value of private manuscripts and public archives.¹ I gave your program chairman the innocuous title of "The Adventures of an Archivist," which gives me broad leeway to wander where I will. I shall, therefore, attempt to discuss some values of records and will throw in some adventures as illustrations.

Despite the fact that my plea will be for more activity in the preservation of archives, I am well aware that the vast accumulations of business and government records have become a matter of serious concern to a great many archivists, historians, and administrators. There have been times when I have wondered if the care and demands of records would not eventually sap our productive powers, and if they would not overrun our land and crush us more completely than some cruel and avaricious invader. Humorously and seriously, Dr. Vernon G. Setser, of Washington, D. C., wrote in 1943: "We can imagine the archivist a few decades hence, his face grown pallid in the shadows cast by the canyon walls lined with the records of the twentieth century, floundering in papers adjudged by him to be worthy of preservation."²

There are many of us who act as pack rats or squirrels in

¹ This paper was read before the annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association, Montgomery, April 22, 1961.

² "Can the War History Projects Contribute to the Solution of Federal Records Problems?", *American Archivist*, VII, 90-91 (Apr., 1944).

the accumulation of records, except that we neither trade nor consume. Too many of us are "filing fools," and I must confess that I have always been one of them and probably always will be. During World War II, I built up a personal file of some five thousand letters and documents. My files of the Korean conflict contain nearly as many items—letters, daily bulletins, special and general orders, bank statements, memoranda, reports, hotel bills, expense accounts, laundry tickets, and other miscellaneous junk. The fact is that too many of us seem to think that writing or typing on a piece of paper makes it sacred. We remember the case of the Collyer brothers in New York City, who completely filled a four-story house with papers. There have been numerous other similar incidents. Perhaps Don Herold was partly correct when he stated,

And you and I are not sure why we keep half the stuff we do . . . most of the filing that we human beings do is a manifestation of some of our worst traits—our miserliness or stinginess, our fear of the future, our dependence on material props, our weakness for hugging old experiences to our hearts instead of moving bravely on to new ones. Or it may be plain laziness; it takes character and energy not to file.³

There is a fear on the part of archivists and historians that the vast bulk of the records that threaten to engulf us may discourage and repel the researcher. Although I never seem to find enough of the right kind of material for research, there are those who believe that the ever mounting flood of records will overwhelm the individual scholar. One writer stated in 1946 that "the impetus to scholarship seems to decrease in inverse ratio to the amount of source material available in these days of mass record-making and reproduction."⁴ Another wrote that the "problem that is now posed for the scholar is how he is to escape becoming mentally enslaved by the very

³ "Who Wants to Be a Squirrel?" *Reader's Digest*, LX, 104, (Jan., 1952).

⁴ Marie C. Stark, "Policy Documentation in the War Production Board," *American Archivist*, IX, 46 (Jan., 1946).

abundance of his materials.”⁵ Whether these statements are true or not, the extent of the records available today does present problems to the researcher. Nevertheless, we need more emphasis on the value of private manuscripts and public archives, in order that more of the proper kinds may be preserved from the ravages of time, ignorance, and indifference.

A prolonged perusal of thousands of pages of archival literature and thousands of prefaces of historical works leads one to the conclusion that archivists and historians have given too little attention to spreading information as to the value or usefulness of records. Of course, I realize that all of us know the value of records, and that a discussion of the matter touches upon the obvious. However, do we take our collections of historical records for granted? What useful purpose is served by accumulating and preserving records? Since you believe that records are valuable, do you think that all people have some idea of their importance? Despite the fact that one's entry into this world and his exit from it are carefully recorded, and despite the fact that almost all the important events of his life in between, such as education, marriage, military service, land ownership, church membership, payment of taxes, voting privileges, social security, insurance, and numerous other items are made a matter of record, millions of Americans have no real appreciation of the value of private and public archives.

Throughout the files of the *American Archivist* runs the term “historical value” in descriptions of records, as well as numerous variations of it. Let us consider the term “historical value” and its various variations. Homer Ferguson stated in the United States Senate on February 11, 1947: “Public records make up the backbone of history. All men

⁵ Murray G. Lawson, “The Machine Age in Historical Research,” *ibid.*, XI, 141 (Apr., 1948).

with a deep sense of the historical know this to be so.”⁶ How many men have a deep sense of the historical? How many men know why they were required to study history in school? Innumerable Americans have a deep aversion to history and would see no value in a record described as having “historical value.” There are too many of our citizens who have studied dull encyclopedias of historical facts, which are called history textbooks, and have listened to duller lectures by people called history teachers. They think anything historical is dry and boring—something to be avoided as valueless. These same people sit intently before their television sets and carefully read their newspapers, which bring them news of wars and famines, football and baseball games, floods and fires, murders and robberies, stock market reports and inflationary prices, and revolutions and elections, without knowing that such information is history. If we are to expect men to consider records of value because we say they have “historical value,” we must have men who know what history is, why history is useful, and that history is interesting.

We hear much discussion in these times of the “American way of life” and of the necessity for its protection, preservation, and perpetuation. Certainly the Communists and their sympathizers are vitally interested in destroying our way of life. These implacable enemies have evolved or adopted a philosophy in which untruthfulness, as we know it, has been elevated to the status of a science and has become a prescribed rule of conduct. The great power of tradition and precedent is one of the chief stabilizing forces that protect us from those people who would lead us backward into a dark age of indecency and immorality. Although tradition and precedent are handed down by word of mouth, they are also recorded daily in our private manuscripts and public

⁶ Joseph F. Vaughan (ed.), “Senate Debate on Public Records,” *ibid.*, X, 260 (July, 1947).

archives. These records are the basic sources for information which will guide and illuminate the faltering courses of generations to come. Those Americans and foreigners who would have us depart abruptly and radically from the stabilizing influences of our traditions and precedents would have an infinitely easier task if they could bring about the destruction of our records—manuscript and printed alike. If there were no authentic records of our past, the fantastic lying of the Communists would have a far greater effect in their efforts to destroy us. The fact should not be forgotten that many Americans believe that these evil forces have already caused the United States Supreme Court, despite a sufficiency of records of the past, to break with tradition and precedent on some of the great issues of the day.

The importance of records to government officials should, of course, be obvious. Many public officials, however, seem to respect most those records which attest to their financial integrity. Dr. Wayne C. Grover, now archivist of the United States, appropriately pointed out in 1950 that a "kind of permanent amnesia . . . would set in on a government with the factual record of its past, as represented in its archives, obliterated."⁷ Ricardo J. Alfaro, former president of the Republic of Panama, stated in 1937:

Would it be possible to conceive organized government without records of its acts, its laws, its compacts, its intercourse with other governments and its own citizens. . . . A government without archives would be something like a warrior without weapons, a physician without medicines, a farmer without seed, an artisan without tools. Public records are solid ground on which the statesman can tread with security in the incessant toil of conducting the affairs of a nation. They are the silent, impartial, reliable and eternal witness that bears testimony to the toils, the misfortunes, the growth and the glories of peoples.⁸

⁷ "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," *ibid.*, XIV, 5 (Jan., 1951).

⁸ "Address," Society of American Archivists, *Proceedings, 1936-1937* (Menasha, 1937?), 69.

The Army of the United States, like the armies of other nations, has long used history—the record of brave and honorable achievements—to build up the morale of its troops and to strengthen their *esprit de corps*. Histories and records of all military organizations from the company or battery to the army level, together with their colors, guidons, distinctive insignia, coats of arms, mottoes, decorations, and shoulder patches, which are based on the records of the past, help to instill pride and a sense of honor in the soldier. Local histories based on local records tend to have the same effect on the citizens of towns, cities, and counties.

The value of records is well known to great numbers of genealogists. These people constitute a large segment of the researchers who are served by state archives, and they are the type who can and will spread information concerning the usefulness of records. Although the genealogist may be the object of the sneers of the professional historian, he will inform you quickly that "Modern genealogy, if properly pursued, throws much light on manners and customs, eugenics, economics, sociology, philology, topography, and other related studies."⁹ Whether genealogy is the result of sincere historical interest, sentiment, curiosity, snobbery, or any other motive, its results are useful in many ways. Those who delve into it must consult the records, and they come to have an understanding of the reasons for the preservation of private manuscripts and public archives. And the fact might be noted that the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, who have had a tremendous influence in the collection and preservation of certain types of research materials, put genealogical records to a use more important, as far as they are concerned, than does the usual genealogist.

Businessmen ordinarily have little interest in records,

⁹ Milton Rubincam, "What the Genealogist Expects of an Archival Agency or Historical Society," *American Archivist*, XII, 335 (Oct., 1949).

except those used in the immediate operation of their businesses and those which protect their financial integrity. References to winning, saving, or recovering large sums of money by the use of records sound commonplace to archivists, but they gain the rapt attention of businessmen. I found that, in speaking to business groups, a sympathetic hearing came quickly when I related experiences with pecuniary claims which involved the use of records. For instance, I informed them of the incident when I was a member of the staff of the National Archives and ran down a sheaf of papers that aided the government in fighting a lawsuit of approximately \$125,000, which grew out of the activities of the United States Food Administration in World War I; that a law firm in Meridian, Mississippi, gave the Mississippi Department of Archives and History considerable credit for providing the records and maps it used in winning a \$400,000 lawsuit concerning oil lands in South Mississippi; that a file of Mississippi Supreme Court papers, which could have been destroyed legally in 1890, was a deciding factor some years ago in a lawsuit by which the state recovered the sum of \$100,000; and that we established by the use of an old school census that a citizen of another state had falsified his age in taking out an insurance policy for \$1,000,000.¹⁰

If you will indulge me, I will try to illustrate further concerning the value of records by experiences or adventures gleaned from service in the National Archives (1935-1937), the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (1938-1955), and as United States archivist in Italy late in World War II (1944-1945).¹¹

¹⁰ William D. McCain, "The Public Relations of Archival Depositories," *ibid.*, III, 242 (Oct., 1940); and "The Value of Records," *ibid.*, XVI, 10 (Jan., 1953).

¹¹ There may not have been such an official title attached to the position, but I was referred to in that manner by the National Archives. As far as I can determine, I was the first American officer ever to be assigned to such a task.

There are many different views on the value of records, even on the part of professional archivists and historians, as I discovered as a member of the staff of the National Archives. The first large group of archives received in the National Archives arrived in January, 1936. They consisted of the residue (17,012 cu. ft.) of the records of the United States Food Administration of World War I.¹² The word residue is used, for Herbert Hoover apparently had shipped the more valuable records of this agency to Stanford University. We worked for years on that collection and spent vast sums of money in getting it into good condition. After I left the National Archives, I was informed that the collection had been adjudged valueless and had been disposed of in one way or another. However, I did get to write three articles about these papers, one of which I actually sold, and helped to coin and publish a new word, "archivology." The word did not "catch on" and seems to have been included in no dictionaries.¹³

Too many people have exaggerated ideas as to the monetary value of private and public records. During 1938, after reading Charles S. Sydnor, *A Gentleman of the Old Natchez Region: Benjamin L. C. Wailes* (Durham, 1938), I became interested in the old library of Jefferson College, an institution established at Washington, Mississippi, on May 13, 1802. The institution had declined to the status of a small military school. Its records and old books were stored and were not well protected or used. I found that a Southern state university had failed to acquire the collection and had

¹² *Second Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States, for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1936* (Washington, 1937), 47-48.

¹³ "Papers of the Food Administration for Missouri, 1917-1919, in the National Archives," *Missouri Historical Review*, XX, 56-61 (Oct., 1937); "Papers of the Food Administration for North Carolina, 1917-1919, in the National Archives," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XV, 34-40 (Jan., 1938); and "Papers of the Food Administration for Louisiana, 1917-1919, in the National Archives," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXI, 869-874 (July, 1938).

attempted to see that no one else would get it by informing the school officials that it was extremely valuable and could be sold for a great price. I knew that the collection had no considerable monetary value, but decided to bide my time for the owners to learn that fact. The cupidity of some people in that area had been excited recently by stories that a dealer had bought a copy of the *Laws of the Mississippi Territory* (commonly called "Sargents' Code"), published in Natchez in 1799 for \$1,000 and had sold it to an Eastern university for \$2,500. Eventually, the school was in dire need and special efforts were made to sell the collection to eastern dealers. When no one indicated an interest, the school officials appealed to me. Mr. Charles F. Heartman, a book dealer, and I bought the collection for \$3,250, with the provision that all manuscripts and Mississippi printed material would go to the Department of Archives and History and that the other material would go to Mr. Heartman. We took out everything of value and offered to give the remainder to any Mississippi college or university that wanted it. No one would accept what we had discarded, and we eventually sold the residue to an associate of Mr. Heartman. This gentleman, when George W. Armstrong tried to give Jefferson College \$50,000,000, attempted to sell this useless material back to the college for \$2,250 and thereby caused us some unfavorable publicity. However, Walter Winchell, Drew Pearson, and certain organizations thwarted Mr. Armstrong and the gift was never consummated.¹⁴ Thereupon, Mr. Heartman's associate committed suicide. Eventually, I found that he had purloined a portion of the manuscripts, and I had to buy them back from a New Orleans dealer. Despite all difficulties, we did save 8,814 letters and docu-

¹⁴ Jackson *Daily News*, Aug. 22, Oct. 24, 29, Nov. 6, 14, 1949; *Time*, LIV, 40 (Nov. 7, 1949); George W. Armstrong, *The Truth About My Alleged \$50,000,000 Donation* (Fort Worth, 1950).

ments and 35 manuscript volumes of that historic institution, all of which were duly deposited in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

There are many Americans who see no real value in historical documents, but who fortunately seem loath to destroy them. On April 30, 1938 I acquired the papers of John C. Burrus from an abandoned mansion in Bolivar County, Mississippi. Rain from broken windows, accumulated dust from the cotton fields, roosting chickens, and vandals had taken their toll from what was once a fine collection of family papers dating back to 1831. The ante-bellum mansion, the only one left in that county, is called "Hollywood" and it was the site of the filming of the motion picture "Baby Doll." Legend has it that John Wilkes Booth was hidden there during his supposed flight after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Lieutenant General Jubal A. Early stopped there on his journey westward to attempt to join Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby-Smith. Lieutenant General Wade Hampton had a plantation in the vicinity. Because of some feeling on the part of the family for the value of these manuscripts, which prevented their being destroyed just to tidy up the house, I was able to salvage 2,144 letters and documents from what must once have been a fine collection of many thousands.

Some people have very peculiar ideas as to the value of records. Many years ago, I ran into a most interesting and unusual use of the records of the Dana family in "Goat Castle" in Natchez. One of the most sensational murder cases in the history of Mississippi occurred on August 4, 1932, when Miss Jane Suget Merrill, the owner of "Glenburnie" in Natchez was shot and killed. The case involved Richard Dana and Miss Octavia Dockery, occupants of "Glenwood," which was later referred to as "Goat Castle." These three persons were connected with some of the most distinguished

families in Natchez and in the United States. I visited Mr. Dana and Miss Dockery several times in an effort to get their papers for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Many priceless manuscripts had been taken by vandals while Mr. Dana and Miss Dockery were under arrest for the murder of Miss Merrill. The goats, which had roamed freely throughout the old mansion for many years, had devoured their share. However, many interesting items remained, including Robert E. Lee letters. Mr. Dana always received me in the spacious library of the mansion where the walls were lined with religious and theological books of no historical or monetary value. He had stuffed the priceless family manuscripts on the shelves behind the books, and explained that he had to provide something for the mice to nibble on to keep them from mutilating the books. Needless to say, I was never able to get that collection, for Mr. Dana felt that it was being put to a use far more valuable than research.

The way in which records are used often provides a great source of satisfaction to the archivist. The illustration I shall use here pertains to the papers of the first bank to be established in Mississippi. On December 23, 1809 the General Assembly of the Mississippi Territory, meeting in the Town of Washington, authorized the establishment of the Bank of the Mississippi with a capital of \$500,000. The name of the bank was changed on February 4, 1818 to the Bank of the State of Mississippi. This institution enjoyed a monopoly of the banking business of the state until the Planters' Bank was chartered on February 10, 1830. The officials of the old bank, angered by the establishment of the new one, decided to liquidate and close their institution. They did so and deposited their records with another bank, where they remained in the attic until they were removed by Dr. Dunbar Rowland, on August 14, 1913, to the Mississippi Department

of Archives and History. Unfortunately, Dr. Rowland never processed this collection, and I was unable to get the documents sorted and filed until November, 1954. The collection contained 38,236 letters and documents and a large number of bound volumes. Shortly after World War II, R. C. Weems, Jr., dean of the School of Business of Mississippi State College, wrote me that he wanted to write a history of banking in Mississippi as a doctoral dissertation. I immediately informed him that he did not want to write a history of banking in the state, but that he really wanted to write a history of the first bank in the state. He agreed and successfully completed a dissertation which was accepted by Columbia University in 1951.

The discovery of records which substantiate or verify something, or disprove it, gives one a sense of great satisfaction. Twenty years ago I read in William Alexander Percy's *Lanterns on the Levee* the following statement which intrigued me:

The first Percy in our part of the South, my great-great-great grandfather, was Charles. He blew in from the gray or blue sea-ways with a ship of his own, a cargo of slaves, and a Spanish grant to lands in the Buffalo country south of Natchez. . . . Don Carlos settled down on his plantation and married him an intelligent French lady from the other side of the river. The Lord blessed them with progeny, and things seemed to be going well and quite respectably when a lady suddenly appeared from England and said to Don Carlos: "I am the long lost wife of your bosom." As if that was not enough, she added: "Behold, your son and heir!" Whereupon she tendered him, not a wee bairn, but a full-grown Captain in the British Navy, also yclept Charles. Certainly a discouraging business all round. It is not recorded that Don Carlos slapped the lady, but of course he was thoroughly provoked and everybody immediately began suing everybody else. Somewhere during the commotion Don Carlos walked down to the creek with a sugar kettle, tied it round his neck, and hopped in. The creek is still there and is called Percy's creek to this good day.¹⁵

¹⁵ (New York, 1941), 39-40.

The story intrigued me because it was unusual and because the Percy family had been prominent in the state for a century and a half. However, I assumed that it was the product of legend or the imagination of the writer. You can well imagine my surprise when, together with Dr. William B. Hamilton of Duke University, I found the papers of the jury which held the inquest to inquire into the death of Charles Percy who had committed suicide in the Buffalo District, Government of Natchez, on January 30, 1794, and the will he had made on January 22, 1794. I further found an inventory of his property made on February 20, 1794, and another one made on January 27, 1804. Then we discovered court papers pertaining to litigation concerning the estate dated as late as 1807. The whole fascinating story would make a book and the discovery of the records and the piecing them together was far more interesting than a detective story.¹⁶ We were able to correct William Alexander Percy's account to the extent that the first son was not Charles but Robert, that the son was not a captain but a lieutenant, that the French lady was named Susanna Collins, and that Charles Percy also had a third wife in the Bermudas. We made no money and added little to mankind's knowledge, but we did derive a great deal of satisfaction from verifying Mr. Percy's story.

Many memories remain of my archival work in Italy and of the valiant efforts of the Italians to save and preserve their priceless archives. We protected the Archivio Ordinario of Benito Mussolini in the Viminale in Rome. I walked among the ruins of the Archivio di Stato in Milano, which was hit by British incendiary bombs on August 14-15, 1943,

¹⁶ William B. Hamilton and William D. McCain (eds.), "Wealth in the Natchez Region: Inventories of the Estate of Charles Percy, 1794 and 1804," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XVI, 290-316 (Oct., 1948); William B. Hamilton, *Anglo-American Law on the Frontier: Thomas Rodney & His Territorial Cases* (Durham, 1953), 311-314.

and which burned for twenty days. On the beautiful Sunday morning of May 6, 1945 I took from the basement of Villa Feltrinelli in Gargnano, the last residence of Mussolini, over one hundred and fifty letters written to him by Gabriele d'Annunzio and deposited them that afternoon in the Civica Biblioteca Queriniana in Brescia. On June 11, 1945, I tentatively offered to give the letters to the superintendent of "Il Vittoriale degli Italiani," a national monument built around the villa of Gabriele d'Annunzio in Gardone Riviera, but he refused to believe that such a collection existed. He might have been confused because I was the first American to get into the place after the cessation of hostilities. Later I gave the collection to Dr. Emilio Re, the national archivist of Italy. I may have saved the files of the Ministero della Cultura Popolare in Villa Amedei in Saló which sent the poet, Ezra Pound, to an asylum for the insane, where he successfully evaded prosecution for treason. We seized in the Albergo Principe e Savoia in Milano 2,500,000 lire worth of books the Germans had bought for their libraries, and I took pleasure in turning that collection over to the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milano. It was also a pleasure to help recover deposits of this library from the Abbazia Benedettina di Pontida near Bergamo and from the Castello Airoidi di Robbiate a Carimate, near Como, where its director, Dr. Maria Buonanno Schellembri, had stored its Jewish collections for protection against the Nazis and Fascists, as well as from bombardment. I probably took greater pleasure in personally and single-handedly kicking out the newly appointed Communist director of the Archivio di Stato in Milano during the first hour of his tenure and in restoring the old director, Dr. Guido Manganelli, who had thirty-eight years of service in this position. We protected and rounded up the ministerial archives which had been moved from Rome into northern Italy and hauled them back to Rome in

eleven freight trains of thirty-five cars each. However, the act which seemed to please Dr. Emilio Re most was my discovery on May 27, 1945 of the archives of the Consulta Araldica, which were the genealogical records of the nobility of Italy, in Villa Bettoni, Gargnano, where they had been stored by Mussolini.

Vandals have been mentioned more than once in this paper, and I suppose that I should be ranked among them. However, archives seldom interest soldiers, and they are more likely to make off with books. We are still getting back books from the North which were taken during the American Civil War. The soldier also seems to have a tendency to record his acts of vandalism. On August 28-30, 1958 I appraised for Governor J. P. Coleman, of Mississippi, a Jefferson Davis collection in Denver, Colorado. One volume had written in it the following statement: "This book was captured in Jefferson Davis privet library at Jackson Miss by Christian Shrouper May 1863."¹⁷ Despite the fact that Jefferson Davis had no private library in Jackson, that inscription reminded me of my entire loot of World War II. I have a first edition of Benito Mussolini's *Storia di un Anno* (*Il tempo del bastone e della carota*), published in 1944, which contains the following inscription in my handwriting: "I took this volume from Benito Mussolini's office in his Administration Building, Viale della Vittoria 16, Gargnano, on Sunday 6 May 1945." I have another volume, Ministero dell'Interno, Ufficio Centrale degli Archivi di Stato, *Gli Archivi di Stato Italiani* (Bologna, 1944), which also has inscribed in it the following: "27 May 1945. This volume was found in Benito Mussolini's office by me today and was taken at the request of Dr. Emilio Re . . . 31 May 1945. We

¹⁷ "Report on the Jefferson Davis Collection Owned by Fred A. Rosenstock, Denver, Colorado, 28-30 August 1958," MS in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

found the mailing list for the volume in a school building at Mompiano. . . . We found only one copy there. I gave it to Dr. Re and kept this one." It may be that all vandals are not bad and that occasionally one may do something useful in saving records and books.

There have been men for centuries who have realized that the matters mentioned here were important, but their numbers have been too few. There remain too many people who regard our records as "dusty papers" or "musty archives." One of the best statements on the value of records was made by Baldassare Bonifacio some 329 years ago, when he wrote:

If we had been completely deprived of these precious crumbs, we should all be compelled to grope in the dark, to feel our way with our hands not only in history but also in the other disciplines.

There is nothing more useful for instructing and teaching men, nothing more necessary for clearing up and illustrating obscure matters, nothing more necessary for conserving patrimonies and thrones, all things public and private, than a well constituted store of volumes and documents and records. . . . And we will not attain a knowledge of antiquity except through archives and libraries.¹⁸

These things I have said and the illustrations I have given have been to remind you that all of us should take a more positive attitude toward the preservation of our private manuscripts and public archives. Records are necessary and valuable to all of us, because the whole framework of our individual, national, and international relationships is based on the certain knowledge that the human memory is too fragile to be depended upon for the transaction of business and the orderly conduct of private and public affairs. Ben Jonson was right when he wrote in 1641: "Memory, of all the *powers* of the mind, is the most *delicate* and fraile"

¹⁸ Lester K. Born, "Baldassare Bonifacio and His Essay *De Archivis*," *American Archivist*, IV, 233-234. (Oct., 1941).

and Lewis Carroll well illustrated the necessity for records with the following passage in *Through the Looking Glass*:

"The horror of that moment," the King went on, "I shall never, *never* forget."

"You will, though," the Queen said, "if you don't make a memorandum of it."

John Coffee: Surveyor and Land Agent

By GORDON T. CHAPPELL

ALTHOUGH IT IS generally recognized that in the opening and development of any new country, different types of men must be represented, the interest of the historian has usually been centered on a few individuals who seem to stand out as leaders in public affairs.¹ It is obvious that no frontier enterprise could be a success without the dependable, intelligent, public-spirited individual who could contribute in a substantial way without assuming political leadership; and yet comparatively little attention has been given to such men, either because of scarcity of definite information or because their careers do not seem spectacular. While they are sometimes more important than individuals who are better known, they are usually submerged in the masses and classified as the "average man."

Among those individuals who have heretofore been considered "average men" is to be found General John Coffee, who spent the most active years of his life in the frontier region of Tennessee and Alabama. He was at various times frontier merchant, land agent and locator, Indian fighter, surveyor, and land speculator, and finally closed his career as an outstanding planter in the North Alabama region which his earlier work had helped to open for settlement. Thus his life and many activities may be said to constitute an exemplification of the westward movement as pictured

¹ This article was read as the presidential address before the Alabama Historical Association, Montgomery, April 21, 1961.

by Frederick Jackson Turner. He was born in the frontier region of Virginia and spent his youth in the frontier of North Carolina, his early manhood in the frontier of Tennessee, and his mature years in the frontier of Alabama.²

John Coffee was the grandson of Peter and Savannah Coffee, who migrated from Ireland to Prince Edward County, Virginia in 1750, and the son of Joshua Coffee, who was five years old when his family reached Virginia.³ Joshua grew to manhood in Prince Edward County and chose a wife from the neighboring Hanover County in 1769. In 1772 their son, John, was born, and five years later Joshua, caught in the frontier movement down the Piedmont, moved his family to Granville County, North Carolina. Here he worked as a "farmer or planter" until his participation as leader of a company of mounted riflemen in the Revolutionary War interrupted these activities. Upon his return from fighting he moved his family to Rockingham County, North Carolina.⁴

It was in Rockingham County that John grew to manhood and took up duties along with his father, assisting about the farm in raising and marketing cotton, tobacco, and ginseng root and in buying and selling slaves.⁵ Through this practical experience he learned methods which later stood him in good stead. That he also received some formal education is indicated by his handwriting, his use of language, and his unusually accurate spelling.

In 1797 Joshua Coffee died, and in compliance with the

² Coffee's children continued the westward movement. At least one of his sons volunteered for service in the Confederate Army from Texas.

³ John C. Harris, *The Personal and Family History of Charles Hooks and Margaret Monk Harris* (Privately printed, 1911), 59.

⁴ Autobiographical Sketch of John Coffee, in Coffee Papers, Tennessee Historical Society Archives, Nashville. Unless otherwise indicated, all manuscripts hereinafter cited are in this collection.

⁵ This statement is based on a careful study of Joshua Coffee's business papers, including receipts, bills of sale, warrants, deeds, and other materials.

terms of his will, which specified that slaves were to be sold and land purchased with the proceeds, John sold slaves to men in Davidson County, Tennessee,⁶ and purchased a 640-acre tract of land bordering on the Cumberland River in Davidson County.⁷ In April, 1798, John moved his mother to the new region in which he had purchased land.⁸ The community in which the Coffees settled was the richest section in the neighborhood of Nashville, and in addition to offering many economic opportunities in agriculture, commerce, and land speculation, it enabled them to establish direct association with a group of families whose names were to become among the most important in Tennessee. It was here that Coffee and Andrew Jackson became intimate friends and business associates, the bond being strengthened by Coffee's marriage to Mrs. Jackson's niece.

In this frontier community Coffee turned first to farming and later to mercantile enterprise, when his farm no longer required his undivided attention. As a merchant he was a counselor, a center of information, and the marketing agent for the community he served. He operated a river boat business, owned a store, and, with Andrew Jackson, operated a tavern, race track, and boat yard.

These seemingly prosperous businesses soon felt the effects of the hard times brought on by the European wars and the embargo of 1807, which dealt a blow to commercial and planting interests in Tennessee. As a result of the heavy losses suffered, Coffee turned to surveying the unoccupied lands of Middle Tennessee to recover his fortune and to pay his debts. Thus, the very thing which contributed most to his downfall as a merchant at the same time created the

⁶ Bill of slaves to John Overton, Nov. 30, 1797; bonds of Negroes to be obtained for William T. Lewis, Dec. 1, 1797.

⁷ Deed Book D, 308, in Davidson County Courthouse, Nashville. The document was recorded February 9, 1798. This tract included the present site of Old Hickory.

⁸ Autobiographical Sketch of John Coffee.

opportunity by which he might improve his financial condition by serving as surveyor and locator of lands, for as a result of the depressed conditions following the embargo a disposition to migrate seemed to pervade the whole eastern section of the United States.

When an act of Congress in April, 1806, gave Tennessee possession of a large strip of territory in Middle Tennessee which had been claimed by North Carolina, Tennessee, and the United States government,⁹ land companies and partnerships were quickly formed by speculators who could obtain warrants for unoccupied lands. One such partnership, consisting of William P. Anderson and John Strother, began to advertise that it was in possession of the correct surveys, and that anyone claiming lands in the newly opened areas of the Elk and Duck river valleys might "on proper application, be accommodated by the subscribers, either in the character of agents interested in the claims, or disinterested, or by special contract."¹⁰

In order to carry on such a business, surveyors and locators were essential. To meet this need, Anderson and Strother entered into an agreement with John Coffee and John Drake in April, 1807, whereby the latter were to "assist them in locating sundry warrants by them undertaken to locate and enter for several persons." The compensation for such work was to be one-half of whatever cash or lands Anderson and Strother might receive, while the expense incurred was to be shared equally by the two groups, and Coffee and Drake were to give up half of such private surveys and locations as they might make.¹¹ Anderson estimated that

⁹ *American State Papers: Public Lands* (Washington, 1834), I, 584-586. For a brief discussion of the dispute, see Thomas P. Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 182-184.

¹⁰ *Impartial Review and Cumberland Repository* (Nashville), May 17, 1806.

¹¹ Anderson to Coffee, Apr. 30, May 15, 1807. The exact terms of the agreement were apparently not put into writing until the time arrived for a final settlement

within the bounds in which Coffee and Drake were to work they should be able to locate at least three hundred thousand acres of good vacant land, and that "peoples prepared as we shall be will be the only person who can locate—we will have the command of all the warrants we wish for and must get rich."¹²

During the next five years Coffee continued his association with Anderson and Strother, while he and Drake also formed an independent partnership of their own under the name of John Drake and Company,¹³ with the result that it becomes virtually impossible to determine the auspices under which a large part of their transactions were being made. The situation was still further complicated by the fact that, as his reputation as a surveyor and locator grew, many of the leading men of the state began to call upon him for advice and assistance in their own transactions. In July, 1808, for example, he became the agent of George W. Campbell, then a member of Congress from Tennessee, for the handling of Campbell's land business,¹⁴ while his correspondence shows that he also served in a similar capacity from time to time for Andrew Jackson, John Overton, Hugh Lawson White, and others.

One of the larger speculator enterprises in which Coffee took part during this period was in the town property of the present town of Huntsville, Alabama, then a part of the Mississippi Territory. Settlement in Madison County had started in 1805 and had grown so rapidly that by January,

of their affairs. See articles of agreement between Anderson, Strother, Coffee, and Drake, Jan. 1, 1813.

¹² Anderson to Coffee, May 15, 1807.

¹³ *Impartial Review and Cumberland Repository*, July 23, 1807; articles of agreement between Coffee and Drake, Apr. 29, 1812.

¹⁴ Articles of agreement between Campbell and Coffee, July 15, 1808; Campbell to Coffee, Sept. 25, 1808. See also, *Nashville Democratic Clarion and Tennessee Gazette*, Jan. 19, 1810.

1809, there were 2,223 whites and 322 slaves recorded by the census of that year.¹⁵ The territory was included within the lands ceded to the United States by the Chickasaw and Cherokee Indians in the treaties of 1805 and 1806.¹⁶ It was understood that this territory was not to be thrown open to settlement until 1808. However, the speculators crowded into the area in advance and arranged for locating their claims.¹⁷ The land office for the sale of such land had been, conveniently enough, located at Nashville. On the first Monday in August, 1809, the lands were put on sale.¹⁸ William P. Anderson and James Jackson, the latter a large merchant in Nashville, purchased the land on which much of the town of Huntsville now stands. Anderson had been advised of the value of the land by Major Thomas Freeman, surveyor of the Mississippi territory.¹⁹ Coffee was engaged to survey the town site and otherwise have charge of the field affairs of the partnership.²⁰ Among the other prominent men who had purchased tracts in the same locality was a Georgia group including the Walkers, Popes, Bibbs, Moores, Clays, and McVays. LeRoy Pope paid \$25 per acre for the tract on which the "Big Spring" was located.²¹ As soon as the sale of the Madison County area had been consummated, preparations were made by the chief owners to lay off a town on the site of the Big Spring (present Huntsville). Coffee, as representative for Jackson and Anderson, was requested to go to the region before July 4 of the next year and "there lay off the Town in such a manner, or such form as you and

¹⁵ Clarence E. Carter (ed.), *Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington 1934-), V, 692.

¹⁶ *United States Statutes at Large*, VII, 89, 101.

¹⁷ Abernethy, 188.

¹⁸ Carter (ed.), VI, 203, 724-725.

¹⁹ Anderson to Freeman, Aug. 8, 1809; Carter (ed.), V, 637.

²⁰ Anderson to Coffee, month date not definite, 1810.

²¹ Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama* (University, 1934), 73.

Major Walker, the agent of Colo. Pope, shall think proper. . . . Do let the plan of the town be as dashing as possible and the ground on which it shall stand as eligible as may be.”²² The town thus laid off was known as Twickingham.²³

Interest in the proposed new town was greatly stimulated when the Mississippi territorial governor appointed a commission to locate a suitable site for the seat of justice in Madison County, in which the new town was located. The speculators who owned town property in Madison County wasted no time in making contact with the commissioners in attempting to have the seat of justice located in the neighborhood of their respective holdings. Coffee and Major Walker were to lobby for the interests of their respective clients.²⁴ Success or failure seemed to have rested entirely upon whether or not the seat of justice was located in Huntsville, which was the name later substituted for Twickingham. On June 20, 1810, Anderson wrote Coffee that “Colo. Ward, Doctor Dickson, etc., are the commissioners appointed by law to fix the site—Dickson is warm to the Cause—The Colo. is rather cold—Hence every address and ease is to be exercised to effect the object; for unless the town is placed at Huntsville by the Commissioners we shall forfeit our claim to the purchase made by the United States. At least this is my determination.” On another occasion Anderson wrote Coffee that he and Major Walker were “to make the best and such terms as you can with the Commissioners and they shall be satisfactory and binding on us.”²⁵

The commissioners were undoubtedly influenced by personal interest in their decision to locate the county seat at Huntsville, and the price, most likely in town lots, which was

²² Anderson to Coffee, month date not given, 1810.

²³ Miscellaneous notation of Coffee; Carter (ed.), VI, 203.

²⁴ Anderson to Coffee, no month given, 1810.

²⁵ No month date given, 1810.

paid by Anderson and Jackson to them was greater than that paid to them by the other speculators interested in the same scheme. Coffee pointed this out to Anderson, but the latter replied on June 26 that

It matters not whether Mr. Jackson and ourselves sacrifice (to the wishes of the Commissioners, Colo. Ward, Doctor Dickson, etc.) more or less of our interest than Colo. Pope—Here remember that unless the court house is there fixed, what little we now own is a mere nothing and it, in fact, must be forfeited. You will, therefore, readily discover that you are invested with plenipotentiary powers to act in conjunction with Major Walker and everything you do will be right—there are an hundred things that will turn up, in the course of the transaction, that cannot be now well anticipated.

Coffee was thus given power of attorney to act for the partnership.

Coffee, as chief lobbyist for the partnership, seems to have been successful, for the seat of justice was located at Huntsville. Later, Anderson recognized Coffee's success in putting through the deal when he wrote, February 18, 1811, "You have been the cause of all our profits in the Huntsville scheme."

Coffee seems to have had considerable difficulty in obtaining compensation for his services in the Huntsville deal. However, after an extensive correspondence on the subject, Anderson finally promised Coffee his compensation by saying that they were all good fellows and that in any event no damage would be done.²⁶ Shortly after the completion of the Huntsville project, Coffee made a final settlement of all his accounts with Drake, Anderson, and Strother.

Because of the complex nature of these activities there seems to be no way of determining the amount of Coffee's returns; but it is not difficult to accept his own conservative statement, made later, that the business "proved profitable"

²⁶ Anderson to Coffee and James Jackson, June 29, 1811.

because of his great exertions and unremitting attention. "In the course of two year," he said, "I was thereby enabled to pay the arrearages of my mercantile debt, amounting to six thousand dollars, besides reserving to myself several valuable tracts of land."²⁷

Hardly had this settlement of accounts been completed when the War of 1812 brought an end to the land business for the time being. Coffee at once raised a cavalry company of volunteers who gave very effective support to Andrew Jackson in the many Indian campaigns and the big victory over the British at New Orleans.

At the war's end Coffee was mustered out of service as a brigadier general, and he determined to re-enter the land business in a new region. During the Creek campaign he had noted the value of the lands over which his cavalry had moved, and afterwards, on May 8, 1814, he wrote his former client, George W. Campbell, that "the tract of land acquired by the contest will be extensive and valuable."²⁸ Only one position could give a better and more accurate insight into the value of the land thus won from the Indians—that of surveyor of these new lands. Naturally, the office of surveyor was his first choice, not only because of the advantage such a position offered for speculation, but also because he had spent ten years in such enterprise and understood fully the opportunities such a position offered. Many of his friends wrote him reminding him of the great advantages of the surveyor and other land office officials in the new region. Typical of such letters is one, written on July 17, 1816, by W. P. Owen, a surveyor working in the area which was later to become South Alabama. He stated that "there is a great opening for fortunes to be made by those who have

²⁷ Autobiographical Sketch of John Coffee.

²⁸ Campbell had recently resigned his seat as United States senator from Tennessee to become Secretary of the Treasury in President Madison's Cabinet.

tunds—Particular the surveyors. the people in this country have no knowledge of the lands and those from the States who came to Explore the Country Travel the Roads that lead on the Ridges. So they see no Land worth anything . . . a man who can raise Five or Six Thousand Dollars can in three years clear thirty thousand in my opinion."

On May 8, 1814, Coffee wrote his old friend George W. Campbell, who was now Secretary of the Treasury, offering his services as surveyor of the newly acquired lands, if such a position were created. A short time later Coffee was given another opportunity to have a close look at the new lands, acquired from the Creek Indians when on October 24, 1815 President Madison appointed him one of the commissioners to ascertain and survey the new Indian boundary,²⁹ as a preliminary step toward opening it for settlement.

Anxious to get this preliminary work finished, Coffee proceeded to Fort Strother on the Coosa River, where he expected to meet the other commissioners about the middle of January, 1816. After waiting eight days for them to arrive, he became impatient and on January 22 began running an experimental line in a northwesterly direction toward Fort Deposit, from which point it was to follow "down the Tennessee River to the Chickasaw lands."³⁰ Acting upon Jackson's advice, he continued this survey without waiting for the other commissioners and informed them of his action.³¹ In the meantime they had met at Fort Mitchell, but had been prevented from joining him because of illness; and

²⁹ The other commissioners were William Barnett, Benjamin Hawkins, and General Edmond P. Gaines.

³⁰ Coffee to Andrew Jackson, Jan. 21, 1816, and "Statement of Creek Chiefs and Head Men, January 21, 1816," in John S. Bassett (ed.), *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, 1926-1935), II, 225-226. The diary which Coffee kept while running this line is in the Coffee Papers.

³¹ Andrew Jackson to Coffee, Feb. 2, 13, 1816; in *ibid.*, II, 230-233; and Coffee to the commissioners, Feb. 17, 1816.

although they later indicated their approval of his survey, the fact that he had proceeded alone caused the War Department to question the validity of the work.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that Coffee's work brought protests from the Cherokee Indians, who claimed parts of the area which his survey showed as having been included in the Creek Cession. When the War Department confirmed their claims, Coffee returned to his home with the feeling that his work had been repudiated, but in July he received instructions to join William Barnett, one of the other commissioners, in surveying the line specified in the Cherokee agreement.³² Upon beginning this work, the two commissioners found that the Chickasaws and Choctaws claimed part of the land that had been awarded to the Cherokees, and as a result they abandoned the survey and recommended that an intertribal conference be held to consider the conflicting claims. Such a conference was held at the Chickasaw council house on September 6, 1816, with Coffee attending as a commissioner to negotiate with the Choctaws and with Jackson serving as one of the commissioners to treat with the Cherokees and Chickasaws. Through this conference and the series of treaties that followed, the commissioners obtained the relinquishment of all the Indian claims to lands within the area of the Creek cessions, and Coffee returned to the completion of the boundary survey convinced that his earlier work had now been vindicated.³³

Long before the commissioners finished the marking of

³² William H. Crawford to Andrew Jackson, March 8, 1816, in Bassett (ed.), II, 235.

³³ For correspondence relating to the negotiations, see *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, II, 92-123. Coffee's reactions are expressed in a letter to Mrs. Coffee, October 25, 1816, and in his diary written while running the Indian Boundary Line. For a decidedly unfavorable view of the work of Coffee and Jackson, see Annie H. Abel, "History of Events Resulting in Indian Consolidation West of the Mississippi," in American Historical Association, *Annual Report* [1906] (Washington, 1906), I, 277-281.

the boundary line in January, 1817, prospective settlers and speculators had begun to exert pressure upon the government to open these lands as soon as possible. However, before they could be opened for sale they must be surveyed. Coffee, who had applied for the position of surveyor in May, 1814, had been assured by George W. Campbell that his application for surveyor had been made known to the proper department, and that he would fully support him.³⁴ While these negotiations were under way General Jackson proposed a plan to the Secretary of State which, if adopted, would create a new surveyor's district and thus an opening for his closest friend, Coffee. In October, 1816, Jackson wrote Monroe stressing the benefits that would accrue to the Treasury of the United States and the defense of the lower Mississippi Valley if the land acquired by the Indian treaties were placed on the market as soon as possible. In order to hasten the sale, on October 23, 1816, Jackson suggested to President Monroe that the territory be divided into "two districts by a line run from mouth of the Black River east to the Warrior, and an enterprising individual chosen as surveyor, will have the No[r]thern District ready for sale by the first of June next."³⁵ Jackson reiterated his proposal in another letter to Monroe a few weeks later and added that "Should the government divide the surveyor's district, as proposed, and appoint General Coffee surveyor of the northern, his energy and industry will bring it into market in all June next."³⁶

Faced by a heavy influx of settlers demanding that the lands be offered for sale, the government took cognizance of the suggestion which Jackson had made for speedily sell-

³⁴ Campbell to Coffee, Feb. 17, 1819.

³⁵ Bassett (ed.), II, 261.

³⁶ Nov. 12, 1816, in James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 1860), II, 359-360.

ing the land.³⁷ On March 3, 1817, Congress passed a law providing that a surveyor be appointed for the "Mississippi Territory lying north of an east and west line, to be drawn from the river Mississippi, through Fort Williams, to the western boundary of Georgia."³⁸ Such a line very nearly divided the territory into two equal parts. The line as drawn extended across the present state of Alabama just north of the City of Tuscaloosa, Fort Williams being just north of the present boundary between Shelby and Bibb counties.

Coffee's anxiety over the appointment as surveyor was allayed, when he received word from the General Land Office that he had been appointed surveyor of the newly created district. George W. Campbell's letter of March 29 confirmed this information and stated that the salary would be \$1,500.

Detailed instructions for the new surveyor were soon forthcoming from the Government Land Office. The first townships to be surveyed were to be in the region between the Tennessee River and the southern boundary of the State of Tennessee, beginning at the western boundary of Madison County and extending far enough to include fifty townships. Likewise, on the southern side of the Tennessee River fifty townships were to be laid off. The urgency of a rapid survey was pointed out in the concluding sentence of the instructions, which stated: "Considering the solicitude that exists on the part of the Govern't as well as with Individuals wishing to remove to that territory, to bring the public Lands in that district as early as possible into the market, the President expects that every exertion will be made by the Surveyor of the public lands to effect that object."³⁹

For Coffee the stage was now set for the repetition on a

³⁷ G. W. Campbell to Coffee, Feb. 17, 1817.

³⁸ *United States Statutes at Large*, III, 375.

³⁹ Josiah Meigs to Coffee, March 17, 18, 1817, in Carter (ed.), VI, 778-781.

larger scale of the procedure of his old Anderson-Strother-Drake partnership, with the important difference that he had become the principal instead of the agent and that in this case Revolutionary land warrants did not enter the plot. As news of Coffee's appointment to this important position spread, letters of congratulations began to pour in upon him from land speculators in all parts of the country, most of which also contained requests for his assistance in selecting desirable tracts of land or applications for the appointment of the writer or some relative or intimate friend as deputy surveyor. Among the vast number of applications thus received was one dated March 27, 1817, from Coffee's former partner, William P. Anderson, who had failed to get the position of surveyor general and was now financially pressed.

The activity of the speculators was soon perceptible. The sources of detailed information regarding the new territory were in the offices of the deputy surveyors for particular localities, or the surveyor general's office for the entire region. Such being the case, it is not surprising to find the speculators courting Coffee's good will or else recommending their intimates as deputy surveyors. The following letter written on April 10, 1817 by Wm. O. Butler, is typical of those received by Coffee at this time.

It is my intention to vest all the funds I can command in the purchase of Southern Lands—many of my friends in this part of the country have similar intentions. With the view of becoming acquainted with the situation and quality of the Lands, my brother Thomas, has either made application or intended applying for the surveying of one of the districts. I feel much solicitude both for his and my own account that he should get this appointment.

James Lewis of Charlottesville, Virginia, was somewhat more frank than the others when he explained to Coffee that he planned to invest in the lands of the region and desired acquaintance with someone whom he could count on for

information. "I suppose," he wrote on April 10, "that the Surveyors will be the best judges where the best sections of Country will lay and by getting acquainted with them it will promote the object. But I shall more particularly depend on you after you have served yourself and some of your most particular friends (provided I am not ranked in the number) for every particular information."

Early in May, 1817, the surveying began at the northwest corner of Madison County according to instructions. Here on May 10, Coffee met the deputy surveyors and other workers he had employed, accompanied by many more job seekers. Work soon was started by extending the east-west line marking the southern boundary of the state of Tennessee. At each six mile interval surveyors were turned off to the south to survey townships and subsequently the sections in that particular range. This process was continued until land sufficient to cover fifty townships had been set off. Coffee, himself, moved from one point to another to check on their procedure. In the vicinity of Melton's Bluff on the Tennessee River, the surveyors had considerable trouble due to the magnetic attraction in an area of about twelve or fifteen miles which caused an imperfection in their surveys. Another difficulty encountered by the surveyors was that of engaging someone skilled enough to make a draft of the plats.⁴⁰

The greatest problem which confronted Coffee at this time was the method to be employed in surveying the islands in the Tennessee River. If sectional lines were extended through them they would be cut into pieces, so as to destroy their value to prospective purchasers. Unable to reach a decision, on October 24, 1817, Coffee wrote the Commissioner of the General Land Office, suggesting that they be offered for sale in compact bodies since "It is fair to presume that the islands

⁴⁰ Coffee to Mary Coffee, May 10, 21. Aug. 5, 1817; Alex McCullough to Coffee, Sept. 1, 1817.

will be bought by men of wealth and owners of slaves; the fertility of the soil will induce such to cultivate them; but owing to the unhealthy situation of the islands, the poor cannot live on them, or cultivate them."⁴¹ The Commissioner seems to have followed this advice since Coffee himself purchased one of the islands in its entirety at a later date.⁴²

The speculators' hunger for information about the new territory was intensified as the date of the first sale approached. Great numbers poured into the region to view the land.⁴³ Coffee's mail was overcrowded with letters from various parts of the country requesting information about the lands surveyed, the date of sale, and the methods of sale.⁴⁴ Coffee reported to his wife on May 21, 1817, that he had never seen such anxiety as was exhibited since "all are trying to get rich by the purchase of lands in this tract of country."

(To be continued)

⁴¹ *American State Papers: Public Lands*, III, 287.

⁴² Deed, James Jackson to Coffee, Apr. 6, 1825.

⁴³ Coffee to Mary Coffee, Oct. 7, 1817.

⁴⁴ Thomas Moore to Coffee, Apr. 13, 1817; Johnson Hunter to Coffee, Aug. 9, 1817; Jno. Glassell to Coffee, Apr. 19, 1817; and many others.

Henry Ford and Muscle Shoals

By LESLIE S. WRIGHT

PROSPECTS were bright for development of the Tennessee River Valley, particularly the Muscle Shoals area, following World War I.¹ Writing in 1925, Richard C. Henry described the Tri-Cities region in these words:

Three Alabama towns—Sheffield, Tuscumbia and Florence—stand near Muscle Shoals. Their combined population is in the neighborhood of 30,000. They are attractive, enterprising and progressive. Paved streets, splendid churches and schools and homelike residences are marked features of all three. Sheffield and Tuscumbia adjoin each other and are on the south bank of the Tennessee River five miles below Wilson Dam. Florence is on the north bank of the river, almost opposite Sheffield. The three are connected by hard surface roads. Three railroads lead into the district—the Southern, Louisville & Nashville and Northern Alabama.

A fourth city has come into being, a city which adjoins immediately the land holdings of the United States government. . . . The city hall is built, ample for the functioning of the first city government and very attractive, indeed, but no visitor to the Muscle Shoals district believes it will long be adequate, so apparent and so vast are the possibilities for the near future.²

At the time of the entrance of the United States into the war, the Allies having refused to furnish her with necessary explosives, the government built two nitrate plants and a dam at Muscle Shoals for the purpose of assuring a home supply of munitions. The project was planned and undertaken purely as a war measure, but with the idea in the background that the electric power and the nitrate plants would be useful after the war ended, for the purpose of producing cheap power

¹ This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association, Selma, April 22, 1960.

² *The Truth About Muscle Shoals* (Chicago, 1925), 25.

and nitrates. This led to the use of permanent construction. In the appropriation bill, however, there was no provision for the operation of the project after the war. Congress believed that the manufacture of commercial fertilizers was not a legitimate line of activity for the War Department. Furthermore, public policy demanded that the government not enter into competition with private enterprise, the old established manufacturers of fertilizers, and the importers of Chilean nitrates.

Just as the plants were ready for operation, however, World War I ended. The nitrate plants were closed after their test runs and the building of the dam was abandoned.³ For some time no action whatever was taken. An amendment to the general civil appropriations bill, which would have provided \$10,000,000 for continuing construction of the Wilson Dam, was introduced in February, 1921, but was removed in a House-Senate conference. The general theory seems to have been that it was better to lose a little money altogether and forget it than to expend a greater sum in a salvage effort.⁴

The thought of a deteriorating dam and two costly nitrate plants standing unused was a constant source of irritation to taxpayers; and the thought of the cheap fertilizer which these idle plants could be supplying was a constant source of irritation to the farmers. The tremendously powerful waters of the Tennessee were running to waste. Since it was felt that the Harding administration would not support an expensive government undertaking on the Tennessee, Secretary of War John W. Weeks took action to secure bids from private enterprise willing to do the work.⁵ In March, 1921 the Chief of Engineers was therefore requested to ask for bids. Weeks had

³ Oscar W. Underwood, *Drifting Sands of Party Politics* (New York, 1931), 206.

⁴ National League of Women Voters, Committee on Living Costs, *Facts About Muscle Shoals* (Washington, 1927), 17.

⁵ Allan Nevins and Frank E. Hill, *Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933* (New York, 1957), 306.

declared his intention of passing on to Congress any bids that promised "commercial results commensurate with the expenditures that would have to be made."⁶

Henry Ford, at the urging of a number of farm leaders, had begun inquiring into Muscle Shoals in the spring of 1921. Gray Silver, who was the Washington representative of the Farm Bureau Federation, E. A. O'Neal, president of the Alabama branch of that organization, and editors of several farm journals joined with the Tennessee Valley Improvement Association in prompting the enlistment of Ford's capital in completing the facilities.⁷

From Thomas A. Edison, Ford had got a "romantic notion of the possibilities of hydro-electric power." He had already built small dams on the River Rouge and attached small factories to them.⁸ But Ford's interest in the development of power was not limited to "small streams and grist mills," for he predicted that one day water power would run factories everywhere. Therefore, when a committee of Alabamians proposed that he complete the unfinished project at Muscle Shoals, he turned his attention to it as an idea "worthy of the enthusiasm of the master industrialist."⁹

Henry Ford and Thomas Edison visited Muscle Shoals. They inspected the construction work on Wilson Dam, saw the gigantic power of the swift currents of the Tennessee and went carefully, step by step, through the various processes of the manufacture of nitrates. Ford declared, "The destiny of the American people for centuries to come lies here at Muscle Shoals." When asked his opinion, Edison replied, "I cannot answer because the possibilities are so great."¹⁰

⁶ *Facts About Muscle Shoals*, 17.

⁷ Nevins and Hill, 306.

⁸ Garet Garrett, *The Wild Wheel* (New York, 1952), 165.

⁹ William A. Simonds, *Henry Ford: His Life, His Work, His Genius* (New York, 1943), 197.

¹⁰ Henry, 27.

On July 8, 1921 Ford presented a proposal in writing to Secretary Weeks. After a thorough investigation Weeks was convinced that the Ford offer did not constitute an adequate return to the government and suggested that Ford "modify his offer so that it would be based upon an annual payment equivalent to a rate of interest on the total cost to the Government of completing the projects." On January 13, 1922 Ford presented Weeks a modified proposal in which he agreed to undertake the completion, at actual cost and without profit, of the work referred to in his first offer and, when completed and ready for operation, to pay the United States as annual rental of the property an amount equal to 4 per cent of the total cost of such construction.

In his transmittal letter to the Speaker of the House, February 1, Secretary Weeks wrote,

The total expenditures on Dam No. 2 [Wilson Dam] have been \$16,251,038.14. . . . A large construction camp has been built, a railroad track laid to the site, complete construction plant assembled, and the dam itself approximately 30 per cent completed. . . .

There have been no expenditures on Dam No. 3, which is located 14.7 miles upstream from Dam No. 2. Dam No. 2, when constructed will render 14.7 miles of Muscle Shoals navigable, while Dam No. 3 will overflow the remaining portion of the rapids and will improve conditions of navigation for a distance of 63 additional miles. The present estimates of the Engineer Department for the completion of both Dam No. 2 and Dam No. 3 is \$50,000,000. . . .

Situated about 6 miles southwest from Dam No. 2 at Sheffield . . . is United States nitrate plant No. 1 constructed by the United States during the war under an agreement with the General Chemical Company . . . at a total cost of \$12,887,941.31. . . .

Four miles northeast of nitrate plant No. 1, and 2 miles distant from Dam No. 2, is located United States nitrate plant No. 2. This plant was constructed at a total expense of \$67,555,355.09.

Situated about 20 miles south of plant No. 2 in Franklin County, and five miles southeast of Russellville, Alabama, is located what is known as Waco quarry, acquired by the United States in connection with the operation of nitrate plant No. 2, embracing an area of 460

acres, acquired at a total cost of \$52,962.88. This quarry has a crushing plant sufficient to produce 2,000 tons of crushed and sized limestone per day. The total cost of said quarry, including buildings and plant, was \$1,179,076.80.

Situated about 88 miles southeast of nitrate plant No. 2, in Walker County, Alabama, is located what is known as the Government-owned Warrior steam plant at Gorgas, Alabama. This plant was constructed under contract with the Alabama Power Company, dated December 1, 1917, on land owned or acquired by said company. It was built in the vicinity of a coal mine with a view of using coal direct from the mines. It has a capacity of 30,000 kilowatts, and the electric power produced at said plant is carried over a transmission line extending a distance of about 88 miles to nitrate plant No. 2, to furnish power for the operation of said plant. The total cost of the plant was \$4,979,782.33.¹¹

Ford's offer for all of these properties may be roughly outlined as follows:

1. Ford would organize a corporation backed by a cash capital of at least \$10,000,000, the stock and securities of which would be owned and controlled solely by the citizens.

2. The Ford Corporation would lease Dams Nos. 2 and 3 and property incidental to them for a period of 100 years.

3. Annual rental for the lease was to be computed on the basis of 4 per cent of the government expenditures for construction.

4. The Ford Corporation would purchase for \$5,000,000 Nitrate Plants Nos. 1 and 2, the Waco Quarry, and the Gorgas-Warrior Steam Plant with all appurtenances.¹² For his \$5,000,000 Ford was also to receive filtration stations, fully lighted and heated houses, railway tracks, tool cars, and locomotives, and, according to one commentator, platinum worth \$500,000 with total assets equal to \$84,000,000.¹³

5. Ford was to manufacture each year commercial fer-

¹¹ U. S. 67 Cong., 2 Sess., *House Report* 1084 (Washington, 1922), 3-5.

¹² Martin Clary, *The Facts About Muscle Shoals* (New York, 1924), 139-140.

¹³ Charles Merz, "Muscle Shoals," *Century*, CVIII, 617 (Sept., 1924).

fertilizer with a minimum fixed-nitrogen content of 40,000 tons.

6. In order that farmers might obtain fertilizer at a fair price, profit was not to exceed 8 per cent of the cost of manufacture.

7. Representatives to be nominated by the President of the United States, national farm organizations, and the Ford Motor Company were to act as a governing board, advised by non-voting representatives of the Department of Agriculture.

8. Research was to be carried on to discover ways to manufacture cheaper and better fertilizers.¹⁴

At the same time that he was developing hydroelectric power and supplying cheap fertilizer, Ford would also maintain the larger nitrate plant in constant readiness should it be needed for defense.¹⁵

Naturally, Ford expected to derive some benefit from the project other than that of being looked upon as a public benefactor. His main business, apparently, was to be that of producing potash. Alunite, which is 12 per cent potash, 37 per cent aluminum, and 38 per cent sulphuric acid, had been discovered in Utah and could be shipped to Muscle Shoals at a low rate. Once the potash was removed, the aluminum could be obtained for use in automobile manufacture.¹⁶

Another of Ford's plans deserves special mention—much-debated "Seventy-Five Mile City." This fabulous proposal was made in an effort to retain the factory system and to cleanse it of its evil features. Ford had seen and perhaps felt some measure of responsibility for the poverty and hardship of the industrial class. His solution was to make a factory worker a part-time rural or semi-rural worker. Between the electric furnaces and fertilizer factories strung out along the

¹⁴ Clary, 139-140.

¹⁵ Nevins and Hill, 306.

¹⁶ "Why Henry Ford Wants the Muscle Shoals Property," *Current Opinion*, LXXII, 262-263 (Feb., 1922).

seventy-mile lake formed between Wilson Dam and the upper dam, he envisioned small farms of from five to eighty acres. Employees of the factories would buy these farms at the rate of \$50.00 an acre, on reasonable time, and would be released from factory work at certain periods during the year so that they could plant or harvest. Demonstration agents would show them the proper use of farm tools they rented from the factory. Their absence from work would not greatly hinder factory output because each man would know several jobs, and substitution could be carried out efficiently. Because their homes would thus be self-supporting their salaries from factory work would be supplementary income.¹⁷

Although Ford had not really promised to bring about the millennium, somehow the people of the United States seemed to feel that he had. The idea was propagated by real-estate boosters who had laid plans for a city that would make New York look like a prairie village and Southern senators who had "a 'mash' on Henry Ford as persistent and as heady as the shopgirl's dreams of Douglas Fairbanks."¹⁸ Among those Southern senators who favored signing a contract were Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, William J. Harris of Georgia, and Oscar Underwood and Tom Heflin of Alabama. The American Federation of Labor voted general approval of the offer at its 1922 convention.¹⁹

Although it was generally agreed that the development of Muscle Shoals was important, Edison set forth three major reasons for leasing the area to Ford: (1) developing the project would be a safeguard against emergency munitions needs, and Ford's proposal would include preserving this safeguard; (2) Ford was the man who would be most likely to operate it

¹⁷ Littell McClung, "The Seventy-Five Mile City," *Scientific American*, CXXVII, 156-157, 213-214 (Sept., Oct., 1922).

¹⁸ Merz, 616-617.

¹⁹ Nevins and Hill, 307.

successfully—he had proved himself to be a “great manufacturer, with great conceptions, who moves rapidly to their realization”; and (3) Ford would operate the business, not for personal gain, but for the benefit of the majority of the American people.²⁰

Newspaper opinion was one with farm leaders and Southern senators and businessmen. The Kansas City (Mo.) *Star* reported that 600,000 horsepower would be developed by the project. (This figure takes on greater importance when it is realized that the total horsepower developed in the entire United States at that time was only 8,000,000.) An industrial and manufacturing area second to none in the United States would be established, for there would be a surplus of 500,000 horsepower which could be used by cities within 300 miles of the plant. In addition, cheap fertilizer would reduce the cost of production of an average cotton crop by \$75,000,000. The New York *American* joyously announced that at last the government would get some real money for a war investment. A Birmingham (Ala.) *Age-Herald* story read in part: “Mr. Ford offers to convert into an asset what is at present a tremendous liability to the Government, and should his bid be refused, the Administration will have a hard time making an explanation to the agricultural interests of the country.” And the Birmingham *News* said that “Congress will not dare in this emergency to reject the Ford offer unless a better one is made.”²¹ Other newspapers supporting Ford in his offer included the Charleston (W. Va.) *Gazette*; St. Louis (Mo.) *Dispatch*; Raleigh (N. C.) *News and Observer* and the Boston (Mass.) *Post*.²²

What inspired this tremendous faith in one man? William

²⁰ “Henry Ford’s Bid for Muscle Shoals,” *Literary Digest*, LXXVII, 11 (Jan. 28, 1922).

²¹ *Ibid.*, LXXVII, 10 (Jan. 28, 1922).

²² “Ford Winning Muscle Shoals,” *Literary Digest*, LXXX, 11 (March 29, 1924).

C. Richards, Ford's biographer, gave the answer in these words:

Ford was a victim . . . of the reasoning that because a man piles up a vast fortune making a girdle or baking soda or a tonic or a flivver, the value of what he thinks improves with his net cash worth. Pre-eminence in one field, that is, guarantees capacity in all.²³

On February 1, 1922 Secretary Weeks referred Ford's formal bid to Congress. The House Committee on Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry began hearings on February 8 and 16, respectively. Five days later a rival bid from the Alabama Power Company was transmitted to Congress.²⁴ Dan E. McGugin, general counsel for the Tennessee Manufacturers' Association, claimed that before Ford's offer was made the Alabama Power Company had proposed to the government that it would complete, lease and operate the Wilson Dam for fifty years under the Federal Water Power Act.²⁵ Whether this new bid was superior to that of Ford was a topic of long and heated debate. The Providence (R. I.) *Journal* stated that at the end of fifty years the government would net \$90,998,300 from the Ford proposal and \$136,400,000 from that of the Alabama Power Company. On the other hand, Gray Silver, the Farm Bureau's representative in Washington, examined the two offers and disclosed that the Ford proposal would, at the end of fifty years, net \$130,526,800 in contrast with a return of \$87,800,000 for the Alabama firm.²⁶

On April 10, 1922 Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska, a lifelong conservationist and opponent of transferring resources of the public domain to private individuals, submitted his bill (S. 3420), outlining a plan for a government operation.

²³ *The Last Billionaire* (New York, 1948), 2.

²⁴ *Facts About Muscle Shoals*, 17.

²⁵ Dan E. McGugin, *Shall Henry Ford Get Muscle Shoals?* (Nashville, 1924), 7; Merz, 619.

²⁶ "The Rival Bids For Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXXI, 10 (May 10, 1924).

On June 9 a majority report, recommending acceptance of the Ford proposal with the elimination of the Gorgas-Warrior Steam Plant, was brought in from the House Committee on Military Affairs. However, the Congress adjourned without taking action.

When Congress reconvened, Ford declared that his offer still stood. During the next few weeks additional offers were received from the Alabama Power Company, which had meanwhile joined forces with the Tennessee Electric Power Company, the Memphis Light and Power Company, and the Union Carbide Company.²⁷ The final bid of the series was made by W. W. Atterbury, Elon H. Hooker, and J. G. White.²⁸

On March 10, 1924 a bill (H. R. 518) for the acceptance of Ford's bid passed the House and was sent to the Senate.²⁹ Sponsored by John C. McKenzie, a member of the House Committee on Military Affairs, this measure received a vote in the House of 227 for and 142 against.³⁰

By that time, however, public opinion had begun to change markedly. Some of the worse features of Ford's proposal had become more obvious, and "despised, neglected, forgotten Muscle Shoals, apparently destined for the scrap heap, became a great national asset. . . ."³¹ The Lincoln (Neb.) *State Journal* declared: "The Ford Lease has had popular support on the theory that Ford is primarily a philanthropist, but this view has weakened in the last few months." Former Secretary of War Newton D. Baker stated that surrendering Muscle Shoals would be like "giving away all the coal that will be discovered in the next century."³²

²⁷ *Facts About Muscle Shoals*, 17-18.

²⁸ "The Rival Bids For Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXXI, 10 (May 10, 1924).

²⁹ *Facts About Muscle Shoals*, 18.

³⁰ "Ford Winning Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXX, 10 (March 29, 1924).

³¹ Simonds, 198.

³² "The Rival Bids For Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXXI, 10 (May 10, 1924).

Objections were found in the Norfolk (Va.) *Virginian-Pilot*, the Cleveland (Ohio) *Plain Dealer*, the Sacramento (Cal.) *Bee*, the Philadelphia (Pa.) *Public Ledger*, and the Chicago (Ill.) *Tribune*. Papers called the offer "something approaching an act of treason to the public," "a questionable bargain . . .," and "the purchase of an empire for some chicken feed." An editorial cartoon in the Chicago *Tribune* showed "King Henry the Ford" seated upon a throne of money bags, holding as a scepter the Ford Agency, and being offered Muscle Shoals by a kneeling page.³³ Senator Norris called the offer the "most wonderful real-estate speculation since Adam and Eve lost title to the Garden of Eden,"³⁴ and charged that the terms by which Ford would secure the property made it "the greatest gift ever bestowed upon any mortal man since salvation was made free to the human race."³⁵ Edwin Dakin pointed out that the ruler of that day, in contrast to despots of earlier ages, was not the man who owned human labor but the man who controlled natural forces, such as coal and oil and water. His feeling was that "within the next few weeks another Napoleon is planning to be born."³⁶ The Teapot Dome scandal was frequently mentioned in connection with the question of Ford's receiving the Shoals property. The New Haven (Conn.) *Register*, for example, asked, "If it is criminal to lease away the government oil's [*sic*] privileges at Teapot Dome, is it entirely commendable to give a century's lease to private interests of the government's possibilities of power and other treasures at Muscle Shoals?"³⁷

Why did the change in opinion take place? What transformed Henry Ford from a good fairy to a swindler in the

³³ "Ford Winning Muscle Shoals," *ibid.*, LXXX, 11 (March 29, 1924).

³⁴ Merz, 620.

³⁵ William Hard, "Mr. Ford Is So Good," *Nation*, CXVIII, 340 (March 26, 1924).

³⁶ Dakin, 36.

³⁷ *The Muscle Shoals Situation As Viewed By the Press of America*, Series 2 (Nashville, 1924), 5.

eyes of the public? Opposition might be placed under the following headings: the length of the lease and the legality of certain clauses; the lack of restrictions; the actual monetary return to the government; the feasibility of Ford's plans; and the political implications of his action.

Early opposition on the basis of financial return was brought forth by Rowland Thomas in a series of articles for the *New York World*. Thomas had figured out that Ford's offer amounted to only \$3.39 per horsepower per year, whereas the lowest market rate was \$18.00.³⁸ Charles Merz added up the assets which Ford would obtain for \$5,000,000 and arrived at a sum of \$84,000,000. He claimed that the scrap value of property worth that much would be about \$11,000,000. In addition, he argued that Ford would actually pay only 2.85 per cent interest instead of the apparent 4 per cent expected.³⁹

In rebuttal, Ford pointed out that his offer was made at a time when many wartime facilities were being sold for low salvage prices. The Old Hickory Powder Plant had gone for 5 per cent of its cost and wooden ships had sold for less than 1/2 of 1 per cent of cost.⁴⁰

Opposition based upon the theory that Ford's plans were not practicable sprang from two points. The *Gadsden (Ala.) Star* summed up one argument by saying that Ford "would have to build a network of transmission wires at great cost before [the plant] could get started." The Alabama Power Company, on the other hand, already had the distribution system and, being a local concern, "would naturally favor Alabama in the distribution of power."⁴¹

As the controversy over Muscle Shoals became increasingly political, the name of Henry Ford was frequently heard in

³⁸ "Henry Ford's Bid For Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXVII, (Jan. 28, 1922).

³⁹ Merz, 617-618.

⁴⁰ Nevins and Hill, 306.

⁴¹ *Views and Opinions of Alabama Editors on Muscle Shoals and the Alabama Power Company* (Birmingham, 1926), 6.

discussions of potential candidates for President of the United States. When Ford did not remove his name from the primary ballot in Nebraska, both sides became nervous. A headline in one Democratic paper read, "G. O. P. Delighted at Pushing Ford Into Democracy" and a Republican daily bannered, "Democrats Pin Hopes to Ford's Party Dividing Vote."⁴² Whether on the Republican, Democratic, or the third party ticket, Ford was Coolidge's only formidable rival. When, one day, Coolidge invited Ford to the White House, many predicted a trade was in the making—Ford's candidacy for Muscle Shoals.⁴³ A company employee, who saw Ford often in those days, believed that he was totally indifferent to politics and much more deeply interested in developing something like Muscle Shoals.⁴⁴ Ford did declare his allegiance to Coolidge, and the newspapers went wild. The Danville (Ind.) *Gazette*, March 29, 1924, recalled that in 1921 Republicans heartily opposed Ford's offer and went on to state that, since Ford had thrown his support behind Coolidge,

. . . a good many Republicans who were opposed to his Muscle Shoals proposition have seen the light, and with great enthusiasm, have rushed through the House a bill accepting his offer. This may be a mere coincidence, but it is an interesting one.⁴⁵

The fact that the House vote accepting the Ford offer was composed of 170 Democrats and only 57 Republicans might belie this contention that Ford was getting the Shoals as a reward for his support of the Republican candidate.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, in October, 1924 Ford notified President Coolidge that his offer was officially withdrawn,⁴⁷ possibly

⁴² "Ford Politics in Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXIX, 14 (Oct. 27, 1923).

⁴³ Garrett, 164, 166.

⁴⁴ Nevins and Hill, 305.

⁴⁵ *The Muscle Shoals Situation As Viewed By the Press of America*, 20.

⁴⁶ "Ford Winning Muscle Shoals," *Literary Digest*, LXXX, 12 (March 29, 1924).

⁴⁷ *Facts About Muscle Shoals*, 19.

more as a result of the political struggle than of any other one factor. In Ford's own words:

A simple affair of business which should have been decided by any one within a week has become a complicated political affair. We are not in politics and we are in business. We do not intend to be drawn into politics.

We are moving so fast and the settlement of Muscle Shoals' future seemed so far away that we had to find other means to do the things we could have accomplished at Muscle Shoals. In fact, we have passed Muscle Shoals. Productive business cannot wait on politics. Therefore, we are withdrawing our bid.

Besides, when we were first approached we did not have the coal and engines and turbines which we have. That is, when we bid for Muscle Shoals we could have used it. Now we can achieve the same results in another way.

Ford also stated that he still wanted to help the South, and that he still believed that nitrate production at Muscle Shoals was the country's "greatest guarantee for peace on the one hand and for the farmers on the other."⁴⁸

With the withdrawal of Henry Ford's offer, Muscle Shoals stood idle, a sore spot for politicians and farmers, until the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, May 18, 1933, during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

⁴⁸ Samuel Crowther, "Henry Ford Tackles a New Job," *Collier's*, LXXIV, 5 (Oct. 1924).

The Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Alabama Historical Association

By JAMES F. DOSTER

THE ALABAMA Department of Archives and History and Huntingdon College were joint hosts to the fourteenth annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association in Montgomery on April 21-22, 1961. Two hundred and seventy-eight persons registered to hear twenty papers and one illustrated lecture on Alabama historical subjects and to participate in a tour of historic Montgomery and a reception at the White House of the Confederacy.

At 8:00 a.m. on Friday, April 21, registration began at the Whitley Hotel. At 10:00 the opening assembly got under way, with Dr. Gordon T. Chappell of Huntingdon College, president of the Association, in the chair. After an invocation by the Reverend Elbert Watson, pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene, Montgomery, President Chappell presented the Honorable Earl D. James, mayor of Montgomery, who extended a most cordial welcome to the Association. Mayor James cited the historic place of Montgomery in Alabama's history and noted the appropriateness of the Association's meeting there in the centennial year of the formation of the Confederacy. William H. Jenkins of Decatur, responding to the mayor, expressed the Association's appreciation for Montgomery's hospitality. Milo B. Howard, Jr., chairman of the Local Arrangements Committee, made announcements for the guidance of members.

President Chappell appointed the following committees:

Nominations—Mrs. Hugh Smith, William H. Jenkins, and Doy L. McCall; Resolutions—Judge C. J. Coley, Dr. William Pratt Dale, Robert N. Pitts, and Marvin Small; Time and Place of Meeting—Dr. Leslie S. Wright, P. O. Davis, Earl McGowin, and Mrs. H. H. Wefel.

At 10:30 a.m. three concurrent program sessions began, presided over respectively by Mrs. E. N. Vandegrift of Oneonta, Hamner Cobbs of Greensboro, and Mrs. Margaret Pace Farmer of Troy.

At Session A the Reverend Emmett Gribbin of the Episcopal Church and Student Center at the University of Alabama presented a paper entitled "Confederate Bishop and Federal Generals," which dealt with Episcopal Bishop Henry C. Lay of Arkansas. Lay, who had been with Confederate General Hood at Atlanta, after that city's fall to Union General Sherman sought to pass back through the lines to the Confederates. The very circuitous perambulations of his return journey gave him opportunities to talk with several Federal commanders, *e. g.*, Sherman, Thomas, Grant, and Meade. Dr. Virgil B. McCain, Jr., president of Athens College, read a paper entitled "LaGrange College," relating to the Methodist school opened in 1830 a few miles from Lexington. The institution awarded bachelors' and masters' degrees and was generous with honorary degrees. Part of the college was moved to Florence in 1855, but a remnant continued at LaGrange until at length its buildings were burned in the Civil War.

At Session B Ralph M. Tanner of Birmingham-Southern College discussed "Senator Tom Heflin, a Story Teller and Humorist," dealing with Heflin's non-political side. Dr. Robert A. Naylor of Auburn University read a paper entitled "A Mexican Monarchist Views the American Civil War," in which he reported the observations of a Mexican living in exile in New York on the mission of Alabama's William L.

Yancey to England to secure British recognition of the Confederacy.

At Session C Dr. Lucille Griffith of Alabama College, in a paper read by her colleague, Dr. Anne Eastman, discussed "The Attempt to Oust Governor Peter Chester from West Florida, 1779-1780." The Governor of British West Florida was troubled by factious disputes among the province's unruly inhabitants. "William L. Yancey, Statesman of Secession" was the title of a paper by Dr. A. L. Garner and Dr. Nathan Scott of Howard College, which gave details of Yancey's political activities during the months of Southern secession.

Three concurrent sessions on Friday afternoon were presided over respectively by Dr. Frances Roberts of the University of Alabama's Huntsville Center, Mrs. Adrian Hughes of Birmingham-Southern College, and Dr. Paul Irvine of Auburn University.

At Session A Howard A. Sadler of Birmingham, in a paper entitled "Popular Confederate Music in Alabama During the Civil War," said the Civil War was lonely, sentimental, and patriotic, and that the music sung in the Confederacy was fast awakening to an artistic and cultural identity of its own. He was followed by Dr. Emmett B. Carmichael of the Medical College of Alabama, whose subject was "Beacon Lights in Alabama Medicine in the 1860's." Dr. Carmichael gave brief biographies of several outstanding leaders in medical science and noted that six native sons of Alabama had been presidents of the American Medical Association.

At Session B Benjamin B. Williams of the University of Alabama's Montgomery Center presented a paper on "Alabama's Civil War Poets." These, he said, are not the best the state has produced, but their identification with the spirit of the times has caused them to be remembered and has given their work a durability beyond its intrinsic merit. "A Federal Raid into Southeast Alabama" was the subject of the next

paper, by Allen W. Jones of Furman University. In late December, 1862, he stated, a combined Federal military and naval raiding party advanced up the Choctawhatchee River to Geneva and captured the steamer *Bloomer*, which was taken back to Pensacola to help in the enforcement of the blockade.

At Session C Adrian George Daniel of Florence State College presented a survey of the early efforts to improve navigation at Muscle Shoals, in a paper entitled "Navigational Development of Muscle Shoals, 1807-1890." He dealt also with the background of Federal entry into the field of developing the Tennessee watershed area. Arthur Owens of Mobile discussed "The Battle of Mobile Bay," of August 5, 1864, in which Admiral David Farragut's Federal fleet overcame the stout resistance of Confederate Admiral Buchanan's smaller squadron of defense vessels.

In yet another round of afternoon activities chartered buses took members of the gathering on a well-planned and well-conducted tour of historic places in Montgomery, ending at the White House of the Confederacy, where there was a reception for the Association.

On Friday evening at seven o'clock came the Association's annual dinner, at the Whitley Hotel, with Dr. Ralph B. Draughon, president of Auburn University, presiding. Dr. Leslie S. Wright, president of Howard College, said grace, and Dr. Peter A. Brannon, director of the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, introduced the principal speaker, Dr. Gordon T. Chappell, the Association's president. The presidential address, "John Coffee: Surveyor and Land Agent," an ably written paper based upon years of research, appears in full elsewhere in this issue of the *Review*.

A second feature of the evening program was "Alabama History in Pictures," by Dr. Charles G. Summersell of the University of Alabama. Dr. Summersell presented selections from a large number of color slides made by him for film

strips on Alabama history, which are being published for use in schools of the state.

The Saturday morning sessions were held in Flowers Hall at Huntingdon College. Registration began at eight o'clock, and at nine President Chappell called the opening assembly to order. Reverend Elbert Watson said grace. Secretary James F. Sulzby discussed the Association's autumnal pilgrimages of the past three years; he reported attendance at these as 250 at Claiborne in 1958, 300 at Gainesville in 1959, and 259 at St. Stephens in 1960. Mr. Sulzby suggested that the Association needed more members and proposed that each member recommend someone else this year.

Judge C. J. Coley, reporting for the Membership Committee, announced that on April 1, 1958, the Association had 1,458 members. Treasurer Milo B. Howard, Jr., gave his annual report, a copy of which appears elsewhere in this issue of the *Review*. Hamner Cobbs invited the Association to Greensboro for the 1961 pilgrimage, and his invitation was accepted. Editor Wm. Stanley Hoole reported that 1,651 copies of *The Alabama Review* were currently being sent out, 1,479 to individuals and 172 to institutions and other subscribers. These went, he said, to every county in Alabama and to twenty-three other states and two foreign countries. Dr. Hoole thanked the members of the Board of Editors for their co-operation and requested Association members to send him information on local events for the news section.

Rucker Agee, chairman of the Historical Marker Committee, reported that 144 markers had been erected since the beginning of the marker project, that several others were in preparation, including markers for the Battle of Selma, the Ellicott Stone, and the Gorgas home. Mr. Agee expressed thanks to the members of his committee and others who had made the marker program possible.

At 10:30 began three concurrent morning program ses-

sions, presided over respectively by William H. Jenkins of Decatur, Reverend Aloysius Plaisance of St. Bernard College, and Theodore B. Pearson of Chatom.

At Session A Miss Eva Dendy read a paper by herself and Miss Ann Ratagick, of Waterloo, entitled "A Marshall County Boy Goes to War," based upon Confederate soldier Spencer Clack's letters to his wife. Clack, a former Marshall County schoolteacher, served in Virginia until he was captured in 1863. His letters reflect a view of military life and public problems from the perspective of a soldier. Dr. Joseph O. Baylen of Mississippi State University discussed "John Tyler Morgan, E. D. Morel, and the Congo Reform Association." Morel sought to enlist American public opinion to support a crusade against Belgian King Leopold II's exploitation of the Congo Free State and came into contact with Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Morgan's unpublished correspondence with Morel, said Dr. Baylen, not only reveals the Senator's sympathy for the lot of the Congolese but also his views on the use of the more highly developed American Negro in the creation of a Congo nation which might attract Negro emigration from the United States.

At Session B "Peripatetic Newspapers of the South" was the subject of a paper by Dr. Lewis W. Wetzler of the University of Alabama, who told the story of several loyal Confederate newspapers which were forced to flee their home states to avoid suppression by advancing Federal forces. These papers ultimately came to Alabama, where they either continued publication or came to rest at the end of the war. Dr. W. J. Donald of the Alabama State Department of Health read a paper on "The Organization and Practice of Medicine in the Confederate Army," in which he outlined the organization of the Confederate States Medical Department and described the army's hospital services, field medical

services, and hospitals located in Alabama, as well as the part played by women in these services and enterprises.

At Session C Dr. Frank L. Owsley, Jr., of Auburn University discussed "The C. S. S. *Florida's* Tour de Force at Mobile Bay." The *Florida* was built in England but not fully armed. The vessel daringly ran the Federal blockade at Mobile in broad daylight. The next paper, by Edgar A. Stewart of Selma, was on "The James Mallory Journal, Talladega County, 1834-1877." The journal deals primarily with plantation affairs but contains many interesting comments and observations on passing events.

At a quarter past twelve the members of the Association ate lunch under the trees on the Huntingdon campus, enjoying good food and good fellowship as guests of Huntingdon College. After lunch they assembled in the chapel of Flowers Hall, where President Hubert Searcy of the College presided over the final session. Dr. William P. Dale introduced the speaker, Dr. William D. McCain, president of Mississippi-Southern College. Dr. McCain read a paper entitled "The Adventures of an Archivist," in which he stressed the value of preserving historical records and pointed out the pressing need for discrimination in determining what should be preserved. Dr. Charles G. Summersell described the "Award of Merit," which had been presented to the Association by the American Association for State and Local History for outstanding accomplishments in bringing professional and amateur historians together in co-operative effort for preservation and study of state and local history.

On motion of Judge C. J. Coley, chairman of the Resolutions Committee, resolutions were adopted expressing appreciation: (1) to the officers and committees of the Association and to the editor and editorial board of *The Alabama Review* for work done during the past year, (2) to those presenting papers for their conscientious work and excellent

contributions, (3) to the White House Association and its committee for their gracious reception, (4) to the Tour Committee, the Montgomery Historic Preservation Society, and the Alabama State Chamber of Commerce for the well-conducted tour of Montgomery, (5) to the Publicity Committee, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, the *Alabama Journal*, and WWSFA-TV for their fine coverage of and interest in the meeting of the Association, (6) to the Banquet Committee for their well-done work, (7) to the Montgomery Civil War Committee for its contribution to the expenses of the convention, (8) to Misses Lucky Brettel and Jan Gregory for their work in registering guests, (9) to Huntingdon College and its representatives for their friendly and generous hospitality, and (10) to Milo B. Howard, Jr., and local officials and citizens for their arrangements anticipating every need.

Dr. Leslie S. Wright, chairman of the Time and Place Committee, announced that invitations had been received for the next annual meeting from both Bessemer and Mobile. The committee recommended Mobile for 1962, and the membership voted unanimously to go there.

William H. Jenkins, representing the Nominating Committee, made the following nominations: Jack N. Nelms, president; Caldwell Delaney, vice-president; James F. Sulzby, Jr., secretary; Milo B. Howard, Jr., treasurer; members of the Executive Committee: the officers and Rucker Agee, Mrs. Lee C. Bradley, Jr., Peter A. Brannon, William H. Brantley, Jr., Gordon T. Chappell, C. J. Coley, Bernarr Cresap, Frank M. Dixon, James F. Doster, Ralph B. Draughon, Mrs. Margaret Pace Farmer, William H. Jenkins, Doy L. McCall, Malcolm C. McMillan, Richebourg G. McWilliams, A. B. Moore, Theodore B. Pearson, Reverend Aloysius Plaisance, A. W. Reynolds, Frances Roberts, Marvin Small, Mrs. Hugh Smith, Richard J. Stockham, Charles G. Summersell, Mrs. H. H. Wefel, and Leslie S. Wright. After electing all of the

above nominees to their respective offices, the Association adjourned *sine die*.

The committee in charge of the program was as follows: Dr. Bernarr Cresap, chairman; Caldwell Delaney, Dr. Malcolm C. McMillan, Jack Nelms, Dr. Frances Roberts. Committees in charge of Montgomery local arrangements, under Milo B. Howard, Jr., as general chairman, were: General Reception: Thomas L. Blake, J. Y. Brame, Peter A. Brannon, Mrs. David W. Crossland, Mureal R. Crump, Warren F. Dent, Paul Fuller, Mrs. Bibb Graves, Ellen Hildreth, George Bliss Jones, Judge Walter B. Jones, Mary Virginia Kohn, Laurence H. Marks, Mrs. Joseph G. Mathews, Mrs. Irene B. Munro, Colonel Marion Rushton, Dr. Hubert Searcy, Dr. Austin L. Venable, John M. Ward; Publicity: C. M. Stanley, Mrs. Roy Stuart Brown, John H. Strickland; Reception: Mrs. Arthur B. Foster, Mrs. Fleming Rowell, Mrs. Alma H. Pate, Mrs. Ralph Chalker, Mrs. Leonard Cobb; Luncheon: C. M. Reaves, Dr. Rhoda Ellison, Mrs. Wesley Newton; Tour: Nimrod T. Frazer, Mrs. Files Crenshaw, J. Fairley McDonald; Banquet: Mrs. John H. Brooks, Mrs. Wiley C. Hill, Jr., Mrs. John P. Kohn.

Notes and Documents

THE JOURNAL OF JAMES MALLORY, 1834-1877

Edited by EDGAR A. STEWART

James Mallory, born in Orange County, Virginia in 1807, moved with his family to Huntsville, Alabama in April-May, 1834.¹ In the following October the Mallorys settled in Alpine, Talladega County, which was "then and for several years afterwards, inhabited by the Creek Indians." Mallory lived there until his death at the age of seventy. His home, Melwood, still stands.

In April, 1834 Mallory began keeping a journal, largely in order to compile agricultural and meteorological data to guide his farming operations in a strange, new land. The activities of the years 1834-1842 were described in narrative form. Not until January, 1843 did he begin systematically to make daily entries. But from that date until his death he seldom failed to record, not only weather conditions and planting and other activities on the plantation, but also a rather considerable amount of contemporary history as seen through the eyes of an Alabama planter. In fact, Mallory's own sub-title of the diary, "Journal of Events, Crops, Weather, etc.," sets the tone of the entire record. The "etc." can best be described as the record of Mallory's strong patriotism and his deep religious faith and convictions. Throughout the entire journal he revealed himself as a man who lived close to man and close to God. The very first daily entry, January 1, 1843, is typical: "With Divine assistance, we will try and conform

¹This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association, Montgomery, April 22, 1961. The journal is owned by Mr. Stewart, James Mallory's great-grandson, who lives in Selma, Alabama.

nearer to our duty to God and our fellowmen. The first of this month was cold and disagreeable, the latter part, pleasant and agreeable; planted peas, potatoes, etc. A time of great embarrassment in the country—cruel derangement of the currency, exchanges from 20 to 30 percent, produced mainly by the Legislature winding up all the banks in the State but one. The Legislature passed a most odious and unjust law in districting the state on the basis of white population.”

Living in a time of limited travel, Mallory often concerned himself with progress in transportation. He recorded many of his trips throughout the state, always emphasizing the slow and arduous travel conditions and the delays he experienced in getting his cotton to market. As a result, he was vitally interested in the formation of a railroad and was one of the original incorporators of the road which subsequently grew into the present Southern Railway System. From time to time he recorded progress being made in the development of the railroad from Selma to Talladega. His first entry on the subject appeared on September 26, 1849: “Have been in convention for three days in Talladega Town for the purpose of fixing some route for the construction of a railroad connecting the waters of the Tennessee with Mobile. It was ably and largely attended. The routes were fixed to begin at Selma and to run to Gunter’s Landing.”

February 25, 1850: “There is quite a railroad spirit at work amongst us. Books will soon be open to test the sincerity of the people.”

March 13, 1850: “The railroad meeting was well attended, and about \$40,000.00 was subscribed. Think the prospects are good for the enterprise.”

December 12, 1855: “Finished picking cotton. Nearly done ginning, bailing and hauling to the railroad, making a trip every three days. Five and six bales to the load; it often took seven days to make a trip to Wetumpka with four bales.”

July 15, 1856: "Started over to Shelby to attend a railroad meeting to elect officers. The road has been badly managed. It should have been now across the Coosa. The masses in the South will not take hold of such work, but leave it to a few liberal and wealthy men to carry them through."

January 17, 1857: "The railroad cars crossed the Coosa River. Great rejoicing at the event. For twenty years, have the people suffered for a conveyance to market. The neighborhood is making preparation for celebrating the occasion."

June 12, 1858: "The cars reached the 100 mile station today. A barbecue is appointed on the 15th of July as a day of rejoicing for the result. It will be a source of great convenience to the planters."

October 13, 1859: "There was a large barbecue given at Calladega in joy for the arrival of the cars at that place."

Finally, on February 9, 1861, the fruition of the efforts in completing the railroad were recorded: "Made a trip to Selma. Gone two days—distance was 100 miles by rail. For many years it took a week in winter to make a trip to market and do business."

On May 13, 1868, Mallory described the flight of capital from the South to the East in a sad commentary of the loss to the local parties of his beloved railroad: "Attended the Selma, Rome & Dalton Railroad Convention held at Selma. It has passed from the hands of the original stockholders into New York capitalists. It will now be built to Rome and a connection made with the chain of roads running North. It is hard to yield to necessity, to give up the projectors of it, to lose stock and all, and to have such men as Reynolds, Stone and others, turned out and names and faces new to the friends of the road to manage it."

But in recording his visit to Selma he was still proud of the progress which the railroad had made. On May 15 he wrote, "The day I came up from Selma, a grocer left Oxford

at 2 o'clock in the morning, purchased a lot of goods, put them on return cars, arrived at home at 11 A.M., making the trip in 21 hours. Two hundred and seventy miles—it formerly took two weeks to perform the trip with wagons.”

While recording both national and international events in the years prior to 1860, Mallory had been manifesting alarm with ever-increasing crescendo over the severance of the Union. His patriotism was almost chauvinistic, and he was a strong believer in the union of the country. This is best evidenced by his Independence Day entries, a few of which were:

July 4, 1843: “Spent the day at home with a few friends, read the Declaration of Independence, and conversed and contrasted our government with others less happy than our own, where the blessings and happiness of ours was denied them. May the Lord give us good rulers and continue the joys and comforts of peace and happiness unto us.”

July 4, 1850: “The neighborhood turned out to a dinner. The Declaration of Independence was read, but fear it has lost much of its influence over the people. There is much excitement growing up from the subject of the Nashville Convention. Fear that if Congress does not pass some liberal measure with regard to the territories, the South will withdraw from the union.”

On Washington's birthday, in 1851, he penned: “The birthday of Washington will from recommendation be celebrated more generally perhaps than for many years, from the desire in some portion to sever the union. It is well to call the peoples' attention to the warning voice of that great man on that subject.”

And on the following July 4 he added, “Another anniversary of our independence has arrived and was celebrated in the neighborhood with a bountiful supply of good things. An address was delivered by a Secessionist, but he had too

much modesty to do otherwise than laud the good and great men that framed it, and praise the benefits of the union that resulted from it. May the Fireaters (as they are called), be defeated in the coming elections and taught that an intelligent people know the value of their union and mean to preserve it."

July 4, 1856: "Attended a celebration. A large turn out. Much of the spirit of the day, I fear, is lost in the strife between the North and South upon the slavery question and settlement of Kansas. Hope the excitement may subside and love and order restored."

July 4, 1860: "No celebration of Independence Day. Indeed, it is to be feared that political strife and sectional rancor and hate on the subject of slavery is going far to do away with that patriotism that has heretofore been the safeguard of our union and the glory of our people."

On July 4, 1864: "The day so much celebrated by us Americans, seems to be lost sight of in the present great suffering of our peoples. May a brighter and more glorious one succeed it in our deliverance from our present enemies."

On July 4, 1866, he sadly recorded: "The day was not kept with any joy, many believing that we had better never changed our relations with Great Briton."

In 1867, for the first time since 1843, Mallory made no mention of Independence Day and, finally, oppressive events destroyed all reverence for the day. On July 4, 1874 he sadly commented: "The day has lost its glory for the South, so oppressed by the government, borne down by radical and negro rule and taxes, that the people have lost their love for the old flag."

His anxiety over the state of the Union was not limited to his recorded entries on July 4 of each of the years, however. Evidence of such concern was sprinkled throughout the years leading up to the conflagration. As early as September 16,

1848, "Attended a political discussion. Subject most discussed was slavery question." And a year later, on August 6, 1849: "This is our general election day through the state. There is much excitement on the subject mostly on the slavery question. The northern people are opposed to any further extension of slavery in the newly acquired countries. Hope it may be settled peaceably."

On September 23, 1856, he wrote: "Politics are raging high—slavery is the cause. The North disregards the constitutional rights of the South. Kansas is now the bone of contention. How it will end, God only knows."

April 27, 1860: "There is an alarming state of excitement in politics, on the subject of slavery. The North says no more slave states shall ever be added to the Union. They are not willing to give us our just rights in the territories by admitting our slaves on the footing of other property. The Democrats are holding their convention at this time in Charleston, for the purpose of selecting a candidate for president. The Union, I fear, is in danger. May God forbid it!"

On December 31, 1860: "The year has closed, Altogether, it has been one of the most remarkable ones in the history of this country. Corn is scarce and one dollar per bushel. Pork, ten cents per pound. Political affairs have been troublesome. Lincoln, the Black Republican, has been elected on the ground of freedom to the slaves. The states are greatly excited. South Carolina has already withdrawn from the union, and others threaten to follow. Congress seems to be engaged in an effort to do all that it can to quiet the excitement of the country. The union, no doubt, is in peril. If something is not done speedily, it may even run into civil war and ruin the land. May God save us."

On Lincoln's inaugural day, March 4, 1861: "Many a heart trembles today for fear the inaugural address of the Black

Republican President will be unfavorable for peace. Fear that if it should be so, that the new Confederacy will storm the forts at Charleston and Mobile. May God, in His mercy, work all things right."

April 4: "Our political difficulties are yet unsettled, though the indications are favorable to a peaceful separation. May forbearance and moderation prevail against those rash councils that would have no peace."

Finally, all efforts having failed, he recorded the beginning of the conflagration, on April 15: "War has at last commenced. The Confederate troops began the firing on Fort Sumter last Friday. The Federal fleet with reinforcements are standing out, unable to get over the bar. What will be the result, God only knows." Two days later: "Fort Sumter surrendered. No lives lost." And on May 1: "The preparation for war is great on both sides. It seems they are determined to make it as terrible as possible. May the blessed Lord yet avert the evil—Thou art our only help."

The entries in the journal from April, 1861 to April, 1865 bulge with comments on battles and troop movements too numerous to be detailed here.

His own sons were in the Confederate States Army, and he fully recorded the news of them. On June 17, 1861, he wrote: "Our sons, James, Oliver, Francis and Shephard, left us this morning to join their company for this war. May God preserve them morally, physically and spiritually."

None of the sons suffered serious injury in the war. On February 17, 1864, he states, "Our sons are on a visit to us from the Army of Northern Virginia."

And after the bitter ending, he wrote, May 27, 1865: "Our son Oliver reached home after a wearisome trip from the place of Lee's surrender. Our sons are now all at home and in good health, and have not been disabled by wounds or accidents. God has spared them through this terrible con-

flict. May they, along with us, thank Him for it. May they remember it and devote their lives to His service."

Not until July, 1864 did fighting actually occur in his home county. On the thirteenth he recorded: "Railroad convention met at Talladega today. It was well attended for the times, but at night we were aroused and and advised that the Yankees were upon us."

July 14: "The convention met to elect officers, but when the train arrived, they stated that a fight occurred between the raiders and some of our broken-down cavalry at Driver's Ferry. We were driven back with some losses."

July 15: "At eight o'clock the Yankees entered Talladega, burned the depot, otherwise they conducted themselves well."

July 16: "The raiders, commanded by General Rousseau, spent the day at Mrs. Hardie's, along the creek, until the cool of the evening, when they moved down the road. All looked for them to take the road to Alpine and Coosa Bridge. They kept on the straight road. The citizens were moving out to the hills on that road, and most of their effects were captured. The raiders are finely mounted and equipped for a raid. On the Montgomery and West Point Road, at General Lawlers, they began to take negroes and horses, got a large number of each before they reached Sylacauga. They camped seven miles below the latter place. They burned nothing but what they thought connected with the government."

July 17: "Our son Hugh got home from Tuscaloosa—the cadet corps has formed a regiment for service during the vacation. We got letters through from our boys in the Virginia Army. God has spared them so far. Oh, that in His mercy, He would close this awful war."

On July 19 he wrote: "The raid reached the railroad, and meeting with but little opposition, was torn up a great deal."

July 20: "A battle took place at Chehaw, in which we lost

number of men. The work of destruction still goes on in the direction of West Point."

In reporting on the Battle of Atlanta, he wrote on July 21, 1864: "Heavy sounds have been heard yesterday and today in the direction of Johnson's Army. If not a delusive sound, a great battle is going on. All business seems suspended, so excited are the people. At such times, we can only feel what others suffer, where the enemy has overrun the country."

July 22: "The cannonading still continues. The battle must be terrible to be heard so distinctly over one hundred miles. The raiders have done their work of destruction to the road, and are making their way to Sherman's Army."

July 25: "Accounts say our army is doing well around Atlanta; the road is being repaired at once, a train of wagons put on to transfer supplies, couriers also to bear the news."

August 2: "The fight still continues at Atlanta. We are overmatched, with railroads cut; do not see how the army of Hood can be saved. Oh, that God would give us peace!"

September 15, 1864: "Since the taking of Atlanta by Sherman, all has been quiet. Our army was badly cut up and our loss of stores and railroad stock very great. What the effect on the war will be is difficult to decide. Victories nor defeats seem to do little to bring about a compromise."

In recording the final death throes of the Confederacy, Mallory made these entries: April 10, 1865: "It is announced that Richmond has given up. A heavy fight occurred at Petersburg. Our lines were broken and caused the army of Lee and the cabinet to retire to Danville, Virginia. Do not see how this terrible contest can be continued. Most of the Confederate resources are destroyed. All the country, from the Mississippi to Carolina, is in possession of the enemy, food scarce, the army is scattered and very much demoralized. The combatants seem but little inclined to peace. May God, in His mercy, come to the help of the people." April 25: "We

are kept in alarm every day over rumors of the movements of the enemy. All business is suspended, and the future is dark. We have not heard from Lee's Army anything reliable for weeks. It is reported that it capitulated to Grant. May God give us peace in some form or another." May 1: "The news of Lincoln's death and the surrender of Lee's noble veterans with an Armistice for the settlement of this war, seem to be currently reported and believed." And on May 12 he finally recorded the end: "The war seems to be closed by the United States throwing troops enough through the country to stop it. All the prominent men are making across the Mississippi, no doubt to continue a useless struggle that has already caused the death of thousands, suffering and sorrow, the loss of millions in property, disorder and lawlessness through the land, with the fear that order will never be again restored. God, no doubt, has a purpose in the affair, and will punish us in a way to make us humble and subservient to Him."

The continued suffering which he predicted in the last entry, came soon and lasted long during Reconstruction. In his recordings of these troublesome times, he described the sufferings and hardships of his friends and neighbors, much of it caused by the Northerner's lack of understanding of the Negro.

June 24, 1865: "The negroes are in great confusion, as it regards their work and homes. They are ignorant and idle, they do not understand the importance of plenty of food, they believe it will come whenever the appetite calls for it, and they demand more than their labor is worth."

On July 6: "The negroes are doing but little to raise provisions. Our victors will find, when it is too late to save the country, that they did not understand the character of the negro. They will not work but by force or necessity."

August 29: "Demoralization of every kind is the order of

one day. Men of good character heretofore do not *stickle* to the meanest things. Cotton, horses, hogs, corn and wheat are stolen by white and blacks. The Yankees seem determined to put the negro over us. They do not understand their nature, that they must be forced to work."

November 20: "Our court is in session, the first under the Yankee rule. No civil cases tried yet. The grand jury has a prolonged time with the number of unlawful cases before them. Crime has become alarming, and with the strong arm of the law failing to check it, we may yet reap more bitter fruit than even from the war."

On December 31, 1865, he recorded: "The most eventful year for war, death and suffering that has ever been on this continent, has closed. God in His mercy may have some wise purpose in the change of the relation of master and slave. It may be His time for their freedom, and a more active life for the whites, and it may work well for us."

January 23, 1866: "The Congress is steadily at work to oppress our people and place the freedmen in a condition they do not deserve. We are taxed for their support. Laws are passed unfavorable to the industry of the country, and now they propose to give them land and the right to vote."

On April 6, concerning civil rights, he declared, "The Yankee Congress seems determined to place the negro above us. The Civil Rights bill, which the President has firmly given his veto, exceeded in all that was oppressive and tyrannical the other negro bill. It is feared they will be able, regardless of humanity or justice, to pass it over the veto. Some think it will produce a revolution. May God give direction to wise councils. We have had enough of war and all its corruptions."

And on December 15, 1866, he added: "Have given the freedmen the privilege of the day for business, to look for new homes, etc. They desire change where it is plain it is not to their advantage. They do not reason or calculate.

God, it seems, must alter their nature and capacity before any improvement can take place in their condition."

January 1, 1867: "The Freedmen are not disposed to hire. They wish to set up for themselves. They are too poor to succeed, and it would be best to advance them in mental and moral progress."

On February 28, in recording the continued hardships under the radical government, he wrote, "The radical Congress still blindly goes on to legislate for the freedmen against the true interest of white and black. They, with all their cuteness, have failed to discover the nature of the negro and their own welfare. They have gotten mad and lost reason."

On March 5: "Congress has at last placed us under military government. The civil law will be but mockery. The negroes, at last, Americans of African descent, are entitled to vote. What will be the result, God only knows."

On November 25, 1867 he declared that the North frequently did not follow its expressed racial policies: "Many of the Northern and Western States have gone democratic, giving the policy of the radicals a decided rebuke. They have gone against negro sufferage, while the old slave states have forced upon them by bayonets the votes of ignorant negroes. Never such an outrage upon an enlightened people."

On January 26, 1868 he stated: "The Country is under great excitement from the terrible action of Congress in passing such laws as will, if sustained by the people, totally subvert the whole form of our government, centralize all power in Congress and bring ruin for the sake of upholding a party. All legislation favors the negro, at the sacrifice of the rights of the whites; designing whites are trying to produce a war of races, to elevate the most ignorant and worthless. What the result to us and our country will be. God only knows."

On February 10, 1868 he wrote, "The mails give the result as probably for the ratification of the Constitution. The

worst results, I fear, will come of it. The acts of Congress are such that if the country should bear it all, it will subvert its liberties and bring the people to disorder and ruin."

His record of two trips to Atlanta in 1869 and 1870, marked the rebuilding of the South:

February 1, 1869: "Find myself in Atlanta, Georgia, making the trip over the newly connecting road from home in twelve hours. Found the city in a rapid state of improvement. The terrible destruction by the war is scarcely to be seen. It is truly a live place. While the land for many miles is the poorest in the state, yet the trade is large, and it will, from its great railroad connection, become a large place." And in October, 1870, on his second trip he was much impressed with the progress he observed: "October 18th: Left Alpine for the Atlanta fair at 3 o'clock, accompanied by my wife, and reached there at 4 in the morning (185 miles), taking lodging at the Kimball Hotel, the most magnificent structure of its kind perhaps in the United States. It contains 300 rooms, has very modern improvement and elegance. The building covers one acre. Mrs. Mallory and myself were the first that took rooms after its opening. Spent three days at the fair. It surpassed anything in the amount of articles on exhibition, perfection of machinery, stock, fancy work, etc., that has ever taken place in the South."

The years 1869 through 1873 continued to be gloomy ones for the journalist, but on July 6, 1874 he recorded, "The citizens turned out to a mass meeting held at Talladega in large force, to select delegates to represent us for state officers. They met the question of the races fully, and determined to make a bold effort to shake off the vile wretches in power."

On July 20: "Attended a large meeting held at Talladega by the citizens to appoint their county candidates. A zealous feeling was shown to drive out the thieves that have well nigh ruined us."

On election day, November 2, 1874, he stated: "The Democrats and conservatives are hard at work today hunting up all doubtful and lukewarm, to try and defeat the vile party now in power. If the radicals carry this county and the state, we will be well nigh ruined." Two days later, in recording victory at the polls, he wrote: "The state has been redeemed. The Democrats have elected their entire state ticket, and six out of eight Congressmen. The Legislature is democratic. Thank God for it!"

In his few remaining years, Mallory continued to record the vicissitudes of the time, but he did express hope for the future in many of the entries. On November 28, 1876, for instance, he wrote, "If our political condition settles down quietly, with a proper settlement of the eastern question, then we may look for rapid prosperity."

And on April 9, 1877, "The country, after great excitement, has quieted down, the government going on well, the health of the country good, seemingly plenty of food, but money very scarce, and will be so, until dug out of the earth by agriculture."

By 1877 Mallory's health was declining. Although he recorded his protracted illness in his journal, his daily entries became less frequent. Mallory died on November 12, 1877. His last entry in the journal, dated October 3 of that year, was: "Rain, rain, rain, throwing business back. After three months and ten days of sickness (nigh unto death), God, in His mercy, has so far raised me up as to be able to sit up and record His goodness to me."

Book Reviews

To Kill a Mockingbird. By Harper Lee. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company. 296 pp. \$3.95.

The reviewer of a book that has won a Pulitzer Prize and that has been a solid best seller for more than a year is obviously relieved of trying to predict whether the book will be a success. But such a reviewer has an even harder assignment: he should explain why the book is so successful.

Miss Lee has made such an attempt uncommonly hard. She has put together a mixture of ingredients that ought to guarantee a bad novel. The story is told from the point of view of an eight year old child; it is set in the kind of Southern small town that has been described in fiction a thousand times; the characters are exactly the types that a correspondence-school course in fiction would prescribe for a Southern small-town novel; the incidents are standard stock: for example, childhood escapades, first day at school, white child's visit to a Negro church service, a mad dog scare, an attempted lynching, a ladies' afternoon party, and a predictable trial of a Negro for rape. The denouement is pure Gothic fiction.

But out of these stock parts Miss Lee has produced a fine, fresh novel. Even though we have met characters like hers before, going through similar experiences, these characters are individuals; and even though we have read tensely through many a lynch scene and court trial, these hold the reader as if he had never read one before.

The explanation, in this reviewer's opinion, is this: Miss Lee remembers much of what she has seen, heard, and felt; she has discriminating feelings and judgments about what she has seen and heard; she knows what to tell and what to leave out; and she must have worked hard at the craft of putting words to paper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a superior book because it was written by a superior person who became a professional writer without inflicting her apprenticeship on the public in a trial book.

JAMES B. McMILLAN
University of Alabama

The Organization of the Confederate Postoffice Department at Montgomery and A Story of the Thomas Welsh Provisional Stamped Envelope Together with the Activities of the Montgomery Postoffice in the Confederate Period. By Peter A. Brannon. Montgomery, Ala.: Privately printed, 1960. xi, 166pp. \$6.00.

Mr. Peter A. Brannon, director of the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, has performed a noteworthy service in assembling and publishing in this one volume the many miscellaneous documents which record "some of the incidents which led to the great upheaval in American history, the War Between the States." Among the reprinted pieces in Part I of the volume are the "Joint Resolutions of General Assembly of Alabama in Response to the Resolutions of South Carolina," the Alabama "Ordinance of Secession," and the minutes of the first session of the "Provisional Congress of the Confederate States." Included are also newspaper accounts of the reception and inauguration of President-elect Jefferson Davis and a brief summary of the "Confederate Government in Montgomery." Part II is devoted chiefly to the "Activities of the Confederate Postoffice Department at Montgomery" from February 25 to about June 1, 1861, at which time the central Confederate government was transferred to Richmond. Not the least appealing sections of Mr. Brannon's book are those dealing with the "T. Welsh Provisionals"—that is, stamped envelopes issued by Montgomery's first Confederate States postmaster, Thomas Welsh—and with other subjects philatelic.

The Organization of the Confederate Postoffice Department . . . is profusely illustrated with pictures of people, places, events, plaques, stamps, and covers. An appendix includes descriptions of the "Flag of the Confederate States," a "List of Officers and Members of the Independent Rifles . . .," the band score for "Dixie," and other miscellany "pertinent to, but not necessarily part of the story of the Montgomery Organization of the Confederate Government."

Mr. Brannon's compilation and brief running narrative, interesting in themselves, will doubtless prove most useful as basic research data for students of the future. As the author observes in his Preface, "Bibliographically, as these citations are intended to be, there is left plenty of room to go further in the search. It is hoped that these will aid in that effort."

For fifty years a member of the Alabama State Department of Archives and History and since 1955 its director, Mr. Brannon is one

of the state's best-known and revered citizens. This volume is but another of his many contributions to a wider and better understanding of his native state.

WM. STANLEY HOOLE
University of Alabama

Sipsey Portraits. By Rose Mayer Fies; *The Man with a Light on His Cap.* By Milton H. Fies. Birmingham: Privately printed, 1960. 88 pp.

These are the personal reflections of a man and his wife who grew up with the coal mining industry in Walker County, Alabama. More than that, they are inner thoughts, mellowed with time, of the people with whom they lived in a small mining community named Sipsey on the upper reaches of the Warrior River.

As a newly-made vice-president of the Maryland Coal and Coke Company, Milton H. Fies and his wife moved to Walker County in 1912 to begin an operation destined to change the face of the eastern half of the county. "When Rose and I moved . . . we transplanted ourselves into the age of the one room log schoolhouse, the circuit riding minister, and a terrible benightedness." Fies describes his new home, his company's operation, and the people who were his associates. It is in this last aspect that his story comes alive.

This Is Birmingham: The Story of the Founding and Growth of an American City. By John C. Henley, Jr. Birmingham, Alabama: Southern University Press, 1960. xiv, 207 pp. \$12.50.

This Is Birmingham . . . is a fortunately conceived, ideally executed history of Birmingham, Alabama from its founding in 1870, written by a man who was born in the village in 1880 and died in the city in 1949—John C. Henley, Jr., sometime city editor of the *Birmingham News* and for the last thirty years of his life president of Birmingham Publishing Company.

Throughout his adult life Mr. Henley collected data about his home town, piecing its history together bit by bit, from the days of the first settlers in Jones Valley to the coming of the airplane. Meanwhile, he studied the community politically, sociologically, economically. And, as he watched, Birmingham grew from a crossroads to a metropolis of

almost four hundred thousand people, the "Magic City," "the youngest of the world's great cities."

Had Mr. Henley lived to see the publication of his book (by his son, John C. Henley, III, now president of the Birmingham Publishing Company), he would doubtless have objected to the glowing praise his efforts have earned. In fact, he spoke of his book as a "brief historical comment on Birmingham . . . written solely because of a feeling that someone should attempt to set out the record while it remains a living memory." But the fact that Mr. Henley had a passion for correctness and a keen perception of the passing parade paid off better than he realized. For this is a good book, a good history, written by a man who knew Birmingham as he knew the palm of his hand for nearly seventy of the city's eighty years.

This Is Birmingham . . . is handsomely printed and illustrated and well indexed. Its appendix contains much source material, such as a list of "Birmingham Firsts," a chronology of important events, and a roster of city officials. The book was issued in a limited edition of only 510 copies.

WM. STANLEY HOOLE
University of Alabama

History of Methodism in Alabama and West Florida, Being an Account of the Amazing March of Methodism through Alabama and West Florida. By Marion Elias Lazenby. [Nashville: The Methodist Publishing Co.], 1960. 1256 pp. \$6.00.

Many years ago, while editor of the *Alabama Christian Advocate*, Dr. Marion E. Lazenby conceived the idea of bringing Anson West's *History of Alabama Methodism* (1893) up to date. By 1957 he had collected a tremendous amount of data from which he subsequently prepared the first draft of a very lengthy manuscript. Before completing his work he fell ill and died. And the Joint Committee on Publication assigned Dr. Franklin S. Moseley of Eutaw, Alabama to the task of condensing the manuscript and preparing it for publication. The choice was an apt one, for Dr. Moseley performed his task with speed and skill.

According to the Lazenby-Moseley volume, Methodism began in Alabama in 1803 with the arrival of Lorenzo Dow, the roving evangelist. In 1808 Matthew Parham Sturdivant arrived as the "first official representative of the church." These men were followed by Michael

Burdge, James Gwinn, and others, almost all of whom were sent out by Bishop Francis Asbury from the South Carolina Conference in Charleston. By 1819, the year of statehood, Methodism was on the march in Alabama.

The History of Methodism details the work of the church with the Indians, the organization of the Alabama Conference and the North Alabama Conference (including West Florida), year by year, to 1955. A separate chapter is devoted to the Civil War years, and one to each of the colleges—LaGrange, Centenary, Birmingham-Southern, Huntingdon, Snead, Athens, and to the *Advocate*, the superannuate homes movement, Methodist camp meetings, and hospitals. Among the more valuable sections of the book are those containing biographical sketches of bishops, records of the annual conferences (1829-1959), a roll of deceased ministers, a large number of photographs, and other similar source materials, not the least of which is a full and complete index. These are the work of Dr. Moseley.

It is regretful that Dr. Lazenby did not live to see the completion of the work he so carefully planned. He would have been highly pleased with the efforts of his successor, for the Lazenby-Moseley combination has produced a milestone in Methodist publishing. It is a volume in which all Alabamians, regardless of religious affiliation, may take great pride.

WM. STANLEY HOOLE
University of Alabama

News and Notices

Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933 is the title of a recent study, written by Theodore Saloutos and published by the University of California Press. Saloutos' article, "The Alabama Farm Bureau Federation: Early Beginnings," appeared in the July, 1960 issue of *The Alabama Review*.

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A bibliography of the works of Jesse Stuart, Kentucky writer of many novels, short stories, and verses, has been issued by Lincoln Memorial University Press, Harrogate, Tennessee (\$2.00). The compiler is Hensley C. Woodbridge, Ph.D., librarian of Murray State College, Murray, Kentucky.

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The April, 1961 issue of Pike County Historical Society *Papers* contains an annotated roster of soldiers who served in the Fifteenth Alabama Infantry Regiment, C. S. A., edited by Kenneth Pittman.

* * *

Miss Nelle Harper Lee, a native of Monroeville and a former student at the University of Alabama, was on May 1 awarded the Pulitzer prize for the most distinguished novel of 1960.

To Kill a Mockingbird is a warm story of understanding and tolerance in an Alabama town, as viewed through the eyes of a small child. It is Miss Lee's first novel.

On April 22 Miss Lee was awarded the Alabama Library Association Literary Award for 1961.

* * *

Josephine Aldrich Harris' latest volume of poems, *Leaf in a Seaward Wind*, has recently been issued by Banner Press, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga. In the Foreword Miss Anne Kendrick Walker states, "It is in the innermost spirit of art which gives [the] work its peculiar charm. Here is an appealing cry which demands our hearing. We find not only beauty, but a radiance by which poetry lovers cannot fail to be thrilled and inspired."

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H. Earle Conwell, M. D., associate professor of orthopedic surgery, University of Alabama School of Medicine, in collaboration with Dr.

ired C. Reynolds of Washington University School of Medicine, has published the seventh edition of *Management of Fractures, Dislocations, and Sprains* (St. Louis, 1961). Dr. Conwell, chief surgeon at the Conwell Orthopedic Clinic (Birmingham), is a long-time member of the Alabama Historical Association.

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The Editor respectfully solicits items for "News and Notices" from the membership of the Association. Particularly does he desire announcements of local historical importance—meetings, publications, speeches, erection of plaques and the like, as well as achievements of individuals.

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Why the North Won the Civil War is a compilation of five essays, each by a different author, edited by David Donald and published by the Louisiana State University Press (\$2.95). The papers were originally presented at the Annual Civil War Conference, Gettysburg College. Although interesting in scope and presentation, the reasons presented for the collapse of the Confederacy are neither unique nor startling.

Annual Report of the Treasurer

By MILO B. HOWARD, JR.

GENERAL REPORT

Balance, March 31, 1960.....		\$ 5,000.09
Receipts, April 1, 1960-March 31, 1961:		
Dues	\$5,940.00	
Registration fees	1,859.50	
Total Receipts.....		7,799.50
Total Balance and Receipts.....		\$12,898.59
Disbursements, April 1, 1960-March 31, 1961:		
Annual Meeting:		
Programs	\$ 216.89	
Tickets	16.48	
Reception, banquet and luncheon	1,316.75	
Printing	36.43	
Postage and mailing	74.05	
Telephone	11.06	\$1,671.66
Pilgrimage:		
Printing	\$ 84.50	
Postage and mailing	110.75	
Leroy School	24.50	
Buses	25.00	
Telephone and miscellaneous	37.48	\$ 282.23
Executive Committee Meeting		\$ 139.43
<i>The Alabama Review</i>		
University of Alabama Press	\$2,958.00	
Printing membership roster	116.40	
Honorarium to the Editor.....	500.00	\$3,574.40
Operating Expenses:		
Postage and mailing.....	\$ 300.97	
Printing	138.35	
Office supplies	193.60	
Returned checks and exchange.....	12.41	
Telephone and telegraph.....	143.00	\$ 788.33
Total Disbursements.....		\$6,456.05
Balance, March 31, 1961.....		\$6,442.54

HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER FUND

Balance, March 31, 1960.....	\$ 802.04
Receipts from gifts.....	713.88
Total Balance and Receipts.....	\$1,515.92
Disbursements:	
Sewah Studios	\$ 694.45
Balance, March 31, 1961.....	\$ 821.47

